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North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot

Evaluation report

March, 2020

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Young person-friendly summary

What is Staying Close and does it work?

Staying Close is a new project, which seeks to improve the lives of young people when they're moving out of children's homes and don't have the support they need. This can include providing support in areas like independent living, education, jobs and training, stability, safety, health and wellbeing, and having enough money and using it well. To understand if Staying Close is helpful, we interviewed staff and young people about their feelings towards Staying Close, and interviewed each three times over a two-year period.

What we found in interviews

How does Staying Close help Young People?

Staying Close has given young people choice deciding what support they want. This may be a drop-in session (twice a week – Thursdays and Sundays), having a support worker – or both, and who this support worker is.

What do Young people want from Staying Close?

Support workers can help young people deal with changes. Young people may feel positive about housing changes, but they may also not always feel ready.

Staying Close involves new ways of working

As well as help with housing, Staying Close has provided support such as the drop-in sessions. These had not happened in North East Lincolnshire before Staying Close. They encourage young people to stay in touch with Staying Close, including weekly access to Fairshare food offers (like a foodbank).

Successes and challenges of Staying Close

Overall, support provided by Staying Close has been helpful. But some staff felt there was poor communication and different opinions between the people who support the young people. Others thought people supporting young people leaving care work well together

Main points and the future

Staying Close has improved the lives of young people leaving care in North East Lincolnshire. The Staying Close team work hard to make sure young people can access safe and comfortable housing. Staying Close workers support young people to grow in confidence and experience managing their own bills and rent. Young people are given choice and control over how much support and communication they need from their Staying Close worker, and with housing, bills, education, jobs and training.

Key messages

Staying Close complements and contributes to the existing leaving care system in North East Lincolnshire. The pilot has been successfully implemented. It has made changes to the Staying Close offer and how this is delivered, particularly in terms of the accommodation offer. There are elements of the pilot that are innovative, particularly the twice-weekly drop-in sessions. Staying Close is well regarded by staff, stakeholders, and young people accessing Staying Close support.

Some further work is needed to identify and reduce gaps and tensions in the leaving care system in the borough, particularly for young people who have wider health and social care support needs as they move from children's to adult services. It may also be beneficial for the borough to examine the scopes of practice of different professionals in the system to ensure they are complementary and understood.

Young people have voice and choice when accessing Staying Close support in North East Lincolnshire. They have a choice about the type and level of support they receive, as well as about their primary support contact. They can also, informally, voice concerns and make suggestions, particularly through the drop-in sessions.

The Staying Close offer is personalised in North East Lincolnshire, and there is evidence that the pilot and the wider leaving care system recognises that the transition to independent adulthood is a journey (not always by the most direct route), which is different for each young person.

One future challenge is around the sustainability of Staying Close in the long term. It appears that the pilot is making a contribution to positive education, employment and training outcomes, and could make a contribution to positive accommodation outcomes. In other areas, it has not been possible to measure the distance travelled by young people as they access Staying Close in the borough, or to assess whether Staying Close may have contributed to this positive change. More work is needed to demonstrate the outcomes achieved and the benefits generated by this form of support. In particular, some work to better align the scheme's objectives, expected outcomes, and outcome data collected would be beneficial. The break-even analysis undertaken as part of this evaluation suggests that it is likely the intervention will break-even, however further research is required to determine the actual scale of the savings made.

North East Lincolnshire is one of eight Staying Close pilots in England. There are significant differences between the pilots in terms of their objectives, their expected outcomes, the Staying Close offer, how and what form of support is provided, and whether and how they work to provide safe and suitable accommodation for young people as they transition to independent adulthood. These differences need to be taken into account if Staying Close is rolled out nationally.

Executive summary

Introduction

Young people transitioning from residential care to independent adulthood face two significant challenges; their transition period is generally shorter, and occurs at a younger age, than their non-care experienced peers; and they often face significant challenges because of their life experiences before they entered, and during their, care. They often face a 'cliff edge' as they leave care, and have poorer outcomes compared to other young people. Staying Close aims to radically improve outcomes for young people transitioning from children's homes. It is intended to address the 'cliff edge' faced by young people as they leave care by improving and extending the support during their transition to independent adulthood. Staying Close is being piloted in eight areas in England, including North East Lincolnshire.

The project

There are around 35 young people eligible for Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire, of which 23 are accessing Staying Close support. This support includes drop-in sessions on Sundays and Thursdays, aimed at providing young people with opportunities to socialise and reduce loneliness, and close working with Lincolnshire Housing, enabling access to accommodation and provision of tenancy sustainment support and independent living skills. The scheme is part of Round 2 of the Department for Education's Children's Social Care Innovation Programme (Innovation Programme), and has been operating since October 2017. Innovation Programme funding was originally provided for the pilot to run until March 2020. In November 2019, the Department for Education extended funding for the pilot for a further year.

The evaluation

This is the second and final report of an independent evaluation of the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot. The evaluation was a mixed-method, theory-based examination of the implementation of Staying Close in the borough (implementation or process evaluation), the experiences of young people accessing Staying Close services, and the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness (outcome evaluation). The evaluation used a number of different data collection methods and engaged with a range of staff members. It examined the distance travelled in a range of outcome areas by young people accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire, and assessed whether Staying Close could and did make a contribution to the outcomes observed. It also considered the cost and benefits of the scheme. The implementation evaluation took place over three points: scoping, mid-point, and final phase, over the period from April 2018 to March 2020.

Key findings

Staying Close complements and contributes to the existing leaving care system in North East Lincolnshire. The pilot has been successfully implemented; it has made changes to the Staying Close offer and how this is delivered, particularly in terms of the accommodation offer. There are elements of the pilot that are innovative, particularly the twice weekly drop-in sessions. Staying Close is well regarded by staff, stakeholders, and young people accessing Staying Close support. It appears that the pilot is making a contribution to positive education, employment and training outcomes, and could make a contribution to positive accommodation outcomes. In other areas, it has not been possible to measure the distance travelled by young people as they access Staying Close in the borough, or to assess whether Staying Close may have contributed to this positive change.

Young people have voice and choice when accessing Staying Close support in North East Lincolnshire. They have a choice about the type and level of support they receive, as well as about their primary support contact. They can also, informally, voice concerns and make suggestions, particularly through the drop-in sessions.

The Staying Close offer is personalised in North East Lincolnshire, and there is evidence that the pilot and the wider leaving care system recognises that the transition to independent adulthood is a journey (not always by the most direct route), which is different for each young person.

Lessons and implications

Some further work is needed to identify and reduce gaps and tensions in the leaving care system in the borough, particularly for young people who have wider health and social care support needs as they move from children's to adult services. It may also be beneficial for the borough to examine the scopes of practice of different professionals in the system to ensure they are complementary and understood.

One future challenge is around the sustainability of Staying Close in the long term. More work is needed to demonstrate the outcomes achieved and the benefits generated by this form of support. In particular, some work to better align the scheme's objectives, expected outcomes, and outcome data collected would be beneficial. as part of this evaluation suggests that the intervention could break even (that is to say, that the economic benefits estimated might at least be equal to the exchequer costs incurred). However further research is required to determine the actual scale of the impact achieved and the benefits generated. As with all such interventions, it is not always possible to capture and monetize all benefits, particularly second order, longer term, and benefits that accrue to the individual but not the public purse. It should also be stressed that there is a difference between economic benefits and cash savings.

North East Lincolnshire is one of eight Staying Close pilots in England. There are significant differences between the pilots. These differences need to be taken into account if Staying Close is rolled out nationally.

1. Introduction

There is a significant body of evidence, both in the UK and internationally, that young people transitioning from care to independent adulthood face a number of significant challenges (Bengtsson et al., 2018). Their transition to adulthood is shorter, and occurs at a younger age compared to their peers, in a form of ‘instant adulthood’ (Rogers, 2011). Young people transitioning from care often lack access to family support during this transition. It has long been recognised that young people leaving children’s homes face significant challenges and often achieve poorer outcomes than other young adults (Adley and Jupp Kina, 2017). Evidence demonstrates that young people with a history of local authority care (of which children’s homes are a part), have poorer social outcomes in adulthood when compared with peers who have not been under local authority care (HM Government, 2016). They often experience instability in their housing, and are over-represented in homeless populations (O’Leary, Ozan and Bradbury, 2017).

Staying Close is a pilot programme that aims to radically improve outcomes for young people transitioning from children’s homes. It is intended to address the ‘cliff edge’ faced by young people by improving and extending the support during their transition to independent adulthood. The pilot programme is intended to contribute to five outcome areas for young people transitioning from care: independent living; access to education; employment and training (EET); stability, feeling safe and secure; good health and wellbeing; and financial stability (DfE, 2018). The pilot programme recognises that Staying Close will be designed and delivered in different ways by local authorities, both reflecting local priorities and also the needs, strengths, and aspirations of individual young adults as they transition from care.

There are eight Staying Close pilots funded under the Innovation Programme. The pilot programme was intended to test the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of Staying Close, and identified what should be core to the Staying Close offer. Each of the 8 Staying Close pilots is therefore being evaluated. Five of the pilots are being evaluated by a team at Manchester Metropolitan University; three are being evaluated by a team at the universities of York and Oxford. Most of the pilots are being delivered directly by local authorities, with two being delivered by charities.

This report is the second and final report, and focuses on the pilot Staying Close scheme run by North East Lincolnshire Council. The report provides insights on the design and implementation of the North East Lincolnshire pilot. It focuses on the Staying Close offer and how it is delivered in North East Lincolnshire, the successes and challenges experienced in its implementation, and the distance travelled by young people accessing Staying Close in the area. It also seeks to understand the contribution made to the change in outcomes experienced by those young people. An important part of the evaluation reported here is the involvement of young people; in the evaluation design, as peer researchers, as research participants, and as stakeholders.

Note on terminology

This report is one of five reports written by evaluators at Manchester Metropolitan University. For uniformity and clarity the research team has taken some decisions regarding the use of terminology throughout the reports. The reports will refer to **'children's homes'** as opposed to residential home or care home when referring to the homes that the young people have left from the age of 16. There are two reasons for this. The first is to distinguish between the home or residences relating to the Staying Close project and the second is in response to how the young people have referred to their homes throughout their responses to this research. The reports will refer to **young person with experience of care**. For brevity, 'young person' will be used to refer to research participants, as it is understood those interviewed are care experienced.

2. Overview of the project

North East Lincolnshire Council is a unitary authority on the southern banks of the river Humber, focused around the towns of Grimsby and Cleethorpes. The Council has been Conservative controlled since May 2019, and the borough is covered by two Parliamentary constituencies, both held by Conservative MPs (one elected in May 2010, the other elected in December 2019). The area's population is around 160,000 (ONS, 2018); the population size has remained fairly static over the past two decades, and recent evidence suggests there is a net outflow of people from the area (NELC, 2017). Overall, the proportion of this population that is from ethnic minorities is lower than the national average (NELC, 2017), though there are more younger people from minority backgrounds than older people in the borough. The borough is ranked as the 51st most deprived (out of 152) upper-tier local authority in England, with some areas (particularly East Marsh ward, which covers the Grimsby town centre) in the top one per cent of deprivation (MHCLG, 2019).

Around a quarter of children in the borough live in low-income households, though in the more deprived parts of the borough this rises to around 40 per cent (NELC, 2019). The number of children living in poverty is higher than the national average (NELC, 2017). The Council reports that the proportion of children with special educational needs is lower in the borough than the regional and national averages (NELC, 2017). In relation to looked after children, some 130 per 10,000 children are looked after by the authority, which is higher than both the regional and national rates (74 and 69 per 10,000 respectively). This rate has been growing in North East Lincolnshire and across England over the last five years, but the rate of growth in the borough has been significantly greater than the national and regional growth (LGA, 2020). In 2019, around 100 children left care in the borough (DfE, 2020a), of whom twelve were adopted (DfE, 2020b). There were 28 young people leaving care aged 16 or 17 (DfE, 2020c) and 64 aged 18, 19 or 20 in 2019 in the borough (DfE, 2020d).

Originally outlined in Sir Martin Narey's Independent Review of Children's Homes (Narey, 2016), Staying Close is intended to address the 'cliff edge' faced by young people leaving children's homes by improving and extending the support provided by local authorities during their transition to independent adulthood. Staying Close has been designed and is being delivered in different ways by the 5 local authorities and 3 voluntary sector providers, reflecting both local priorities and also the needs, strengths, and aspirations of individual young adults as they transition from care. In North East Lincolnshire, there are 8 local authority children's homes and at least 1 private home, and the Staying Close offer has been designed to support around twenty five young people leaving care for a period of up to two years. The Staying Close offer is tailored to each young person's

individual needs and aspirations, and includes a basket of support hours¹, drop-in group meetings, or a combination of these two forms of support.

The North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot undertakes a number of different activities:

- a) Drop-in sessions on Sundays and Thursdays, aimed at providing young people with opportunities to socialise and reduce loneliness;
- b) Close working with Lincolnshire Housing, enabling access to accommodation and provision of tenancy sustainment support and independent living skills. The accommodation offer includes a period where North East Lincolnshire Council acts as the tenant on behalf of the young person. This tenancy is then transferred to the individual young person when they are assessed as being ready for independent living;
- c) Family Group Conferencing is offered to young people who want it and will include the young person's siblings who are not part of Staying Close, but whose families are judged to potentially benefit from it.
- d) Staff training has been undertaken on an individual basis, according to the needs of each member of staff.

The scheme is part of round 2 of the Innovation Programme, and has been operating since October 2017. Innovation Programme funding was originally provided for the pilot to run until March 2020. In November 2019, the Department for Education extended funding for the pilot for a further year. The evaluation was completed in March 2020.

¹ An agreed number of hours of support provided by Staying Close.

3. Overview of the evaluation

Evaluation aims

There were two key aims of the evaluation reported here. The first was that this evaluation should follow a consistent approach to that used in the other seven Staying Close evaluations, to enable comparison between the pilots. The second key aim was that the evaluation should give voice to young people leaving, or preparing to leave, children's homes. The evaluation was a mixed-methods, theory-based examination of process and experience using a number of different data collection methods and engaging with a range of staff members. It examined the distance travelled in a range of outcome areas by young people accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire, and assessed whether Staying Close could and did make a contribution to the outcomes observed.

Evaluation questions

There are a series of core questions that are common to all of the Staying Close evaluations. There are also research questions that are specific to Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire, reflecting variation between the schemes, their local context, objectives, existing service provision, and scheme design. The evaluation questions cover the implementation of the pilot; the voice, experience and expectations of young people accessing Staying Close services; and, the outcomes observed for these young people. The research questions underpinning this evaluation, and where in this report the questions are addressed, are set out in tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Research questions (common to all Staying Close evaluations)

Number	Research question	Comment
1	To what extent are the planned developments achieved? What was in place previously and what needs to be in place to facilitate successful implementation?	Addressed in chapter 5 of this report
2	How have YP, and other staff members, been involved in the co-production of the model?	Addressed in interim evaluation report (Wright et al, 2019).
3	Have support plans been developed and implemented as anticipated? Has there been meaningful contact with an identified worker?	Addressed in chapter 5 of this report

Table 1 (continued): Research questions

Number	Research question	Comment
4	Has the staff training been rolled out effectively and what has been its impact from staff perspectives? For example, improved knowledge and understanding of the needs of young people leaving children's homes	Addressed in chapter 5 of this report
5	<p>What difference has been observed in outcomes for young people receiving Staying Close? What proportion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Are in accommodation that is suitable (safe, secure and affordable) and stable (with reference to unplanned moves or disruptions in tenancies) b) Are in education, employment or training appropriate to their abilities/wishes/needs? c) Are physically healthy? d) Have good emotional health, well-being and resilience e) Feel well supported? f) Are ready for independent living? g) Are resilient to unsafe behaviours (e.g. substance misuse; missing episodes; violence; CJS involvement; and unplanned early parenthood)? h) Report good social connections, greater social integration? 	Addressed in chapter 6 of this report
6	What has been the character of the support package (e.g. provided by the member of staff from their former children's home) and how has this helped the young person to avoid a problems with their tenancy or other untoward outcomes?	Addressed in chapter 5 of this report
7	What are the costs of delivering the Staying Close intervention and what are the potential cost savings?	Addressed in chapter 8 of this report
8	What are the experiences of young people in children's homes who do not access the interventions?	Not addressed in this evaluation

Evaluation questions that are specific to the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot include:

Table 2: Research questions (pilot specific)

Number	Research question	Comment
1	Have Family Group Conferences/network meetings taken place? What has been the experience of young people and what have been the outcomes?	Addressed in interim evaluation report (Wright et al, 2019).
2	Has Signs of Safety been used? How has the use of this informed support plans?	Addressed in interim evaluation report (Wright et al, 2019).
3	Have support plans been developed and implemented as anticipated? Has there been continued meaningful contact with an identified worker?	Addressed in chapter 5 of this report
4	How has the Sunday Hub been used?	Addressed in chapter 5 of this report
5	Has the communication platform been established, to what extent is it used and how is it experienced?	Addressed in interim evaluation report (Wright et al, 2019).

Evaluation methods

To answer the research questions outlined in tables 1 and 2, the evaluation uses a mixed-method, theory based examination of process and experience through workshops, interviews, focus groups and online surveys with young people (including some young people who have already left the council's care), key practitioners and managers. A key interest to both policy makers and those involved in the pilot is the outcomes achieved by young people accessing Staying Close services. Given the limitations presented by the small number of people accessing the pilot's services (see limitations section below), the evaluation used a non-statistical approach to understanding the difference made by interventions such as Staying Close, known as contribution analysis (Mayne, 2011).

There are three elements of the evaluation design, which examine the implementation of the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot (implementation or process evaluation), the experiences of young people accessing Staying Close services, and the effectiveness and cost effectiveness (outcome evaluation). The implementation evaluation took place over three points: scoping, mid-point, and final phase. A range of data collection and analysis methods were used during this evaluation:

- scoping interviews with project leads;
- Theory of Change workshop, during the scoping phase, with seven key participants;
- young person's co-production workshop with six participants;
- ten interviews with project staff (five mid-point and five in the final phase);
- online staff survey conducted at two points (midpoint and final). Twenty two responses in total (six to the final survey);
- young people's online survey conducted at two points (midpoint and final). Five responses in total (two to the final survey);
- nine quarterly reports and a number of meeting/internal reports coded for thematic analysis;
- four peer-led interviews completed;
- qualitative coding of all textual materials (interview transcripts, documents and reports, and open text responses to survey questions), and thematic analysis;
- collection of cost data, and completion of break-even analysis (a form of cost benefit analysis);
- acquisition, cleaning, and analysis of two performance and outcome datasets and completion of distance travelled analysis;
- structured literature review to support the contribution analysis;
- contribution analysis (Mayne, 2011) to assess whether it is plausible that the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot made a contribution to the outcomes achieved. Contribution analysis is a method used to understand and evidence the contribution made by an intervention to observed outcomes; and
- two workshops held, with staff from Staying Close and the wider leaving care system, and with young people accessing Staying Close, to validate findings and feed into the conclusions, recommendations, and key messages presented in this report.

Changes to evaluation methods

There have been no significant changes to the evaluation method since the proposed approach was agreed with the Department for Education in March 2018. There have been a small number of additional tasks undertaken, over and above those included in the evaluation funding, including validation workshops with staff and young people at the end of the evaluation, and additional rounds of staff and young people's surveys.

Limitations of the evaluation

There are very small numbers of young people who leave children's residential homes in any local authority in any given year. This is the case in relation to North East Lincolnshire, where there have been thirty seven people eligible for Staying Close support over the duration of the pilot (of whom around 23 engaged and were receiving support), and five members of staff directly involved in providing Staying Close services. This small number of means that some evaluation methods were not feasible. So, while the aim of the national evaluation of the Innovation Programme (of which Staying Close is a part) was to measure the impact of funded projects, it was not possible to use such evaluation methods in relation to the Staying Close pilots. As such, the evaluation cannot comment on whether or not Staying Close works.

Participation in the evaluation was voluntary, and it has not been possible to ensure that everyone receiving or working on Staying Close was involved in the research. And, in any case, the evaluation was funded to involve a small sample of those individuals working on or receiving Staying Close. This means that interview, workshop, and survey evidence presented here represents the views of a handful of people (and some people may have participated in more than one way). The evaluation was designed in part to address this, so that a number of different data sources were used at various points in the evaluation. However, the small numbers involved and the voluntary nature of their involvement means that the findings here might amplify positive or negative aspects of the pilot.

The evaluation was funded through to March 2020, to coincide with the pilot funding. At the end of 2019, the evaluation team was advised that the Department for Education (DfE) had extended funding for the Staying Close pilots through to March 2021. This means that the pilot will be running for a year longer than the evaluation. This limits the extent to which the evaluation can consider issues around sustainability, and also consider more longer term effects of Staying Close.

4. Theory of change

Core to the theory-driven evaluation design – and to linking findings from different parts of the evaluation – is the theory of change. This sets out how Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire was intended to work; the outcomes that we expected, and how these outcomes were expected to be delivered. Theory of Change is a fundamental part of the contribution analysis undertaken as part of the outcome evaluation.

The North East Lincolnshire pilot has developed its theory of change considerably over its lifetime. Its original theory of change, developed as part of the Council's bid for funding under the Innovation Programme, focused solely on outcomes expected for young people accessing Staying Close, and identified four key outcomes. During the early stages of this research, the theory of change further developed, although there was a great deal of consistency between the bid theory of change, and that articulated through the evaluation scoping phase (Wright et al., 2019). Between the mid point and final phases of the evaluation (February to October 2019), the North East Lincolnshire pilot further developed and made substantive changes to its theory of change. These changes involved increasing the number of expected outcomes for young people from four to nine outcomes, specifying indicators/evidence of progress towards achieving these outcomes, and including outcomes for staff and partners. The pilot's theory of change as of November 2019 is given in figure 1 (on the following page) of this report.

It is clear that the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close team has spent some time during the lifetime of the pilot developing its thinking around the mechanisms through which expected outcomes will be achieved. In particular, considerable thought has been given to the expected outcomes. Participants (Staying Close staff, wider stakeholders, and young people) identified three key ingredients to delivering these outcomes were: (1) strong, positive relationships – primarily between the young people and the Staying Close staff, but also between the latter and other professionals working with young people leaving children's homes; (2) recognising transition as a journey – the acknowledgement that young people transitioning out of care need (and should be entitled) to maintain supportive relationships with adults they trust as they gain independence; and (3) consistent responsiveness to the young person's needs – by providing bespoke support for young people, covering a range of practical, information-giving and emotional support.

There are two key issues that arise from this theory of change. First, the theory of change does not explicitly articulate the mechanisms (the causal chains or causal pathways) through which positive outcomes will be achieved. Mechanisms are a fuzzy concept in evaluation science, with much debate about their meaning and nature, and how and whether evaluations might uncover them. Broadly speaking, a mechanism explains how doing x activity is expected to lead to y outcome or outcomes. Programmes aimed at supporting young people leaving care as they transition to independent adulthood are generally under-theorised and the lack of explicitly articulated causal pathways in the

theory of change discussed here might reflect this. It should also be noted that mechanisms are a missing component of the theories of change developed by the pilot as part of the bidding process.

A second key issue with this theory of change is the connectivity between the outcomes expected for young people, the indicators of progress, and the outcome data collected by the pilot. There are some minor discrepancies so that not all outcomes have an indicator and/or a measure. Some of the measures appear to have been collected at only one point by the pilot, so that it is not possible to examine change over time. There are also differences between the pilot's outcomes, and the outcomes expected by the Department for Education.

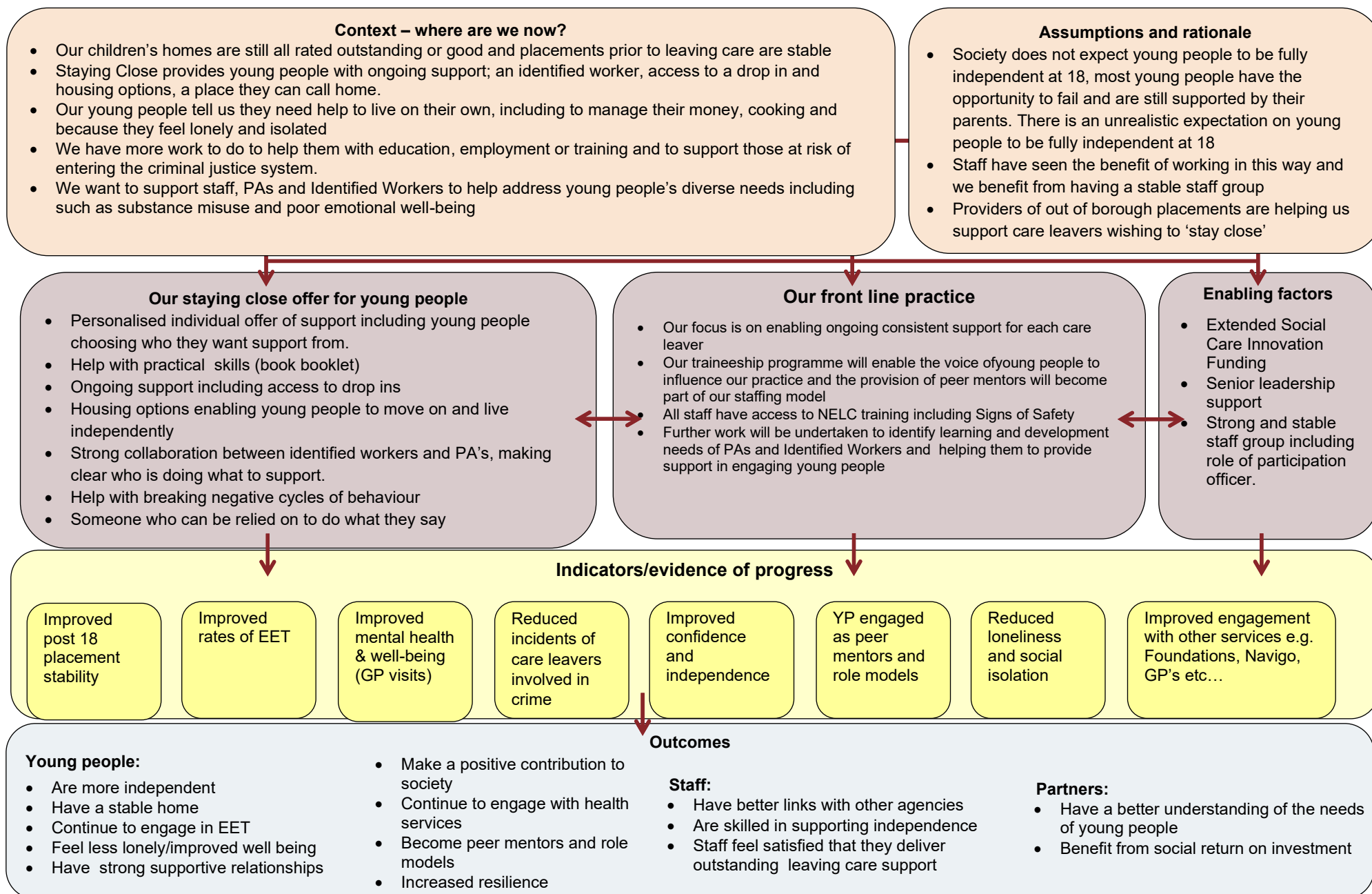


Figure 1 Theory of Change (developed by pilot, January 2020)

5. Implementation evaluation

Methods summary

The implementation evaluation was conducted over three points during the lifetime of the pilot, in May and June 2018, in February 2019 and October and November 2019. Data were collected in a number of different formats (interviews, peer interviews, workshops, surveys, collation of secondary materials), involving young people accessing Staying Close services in North East Lincolnshire, and professionals involved in delivering Staying Close and wider leaving care services in the borough. Some data were collected at two different points, to allow comparison over time. All data were coded in nVivo, and thematically analysed. Both the coding framework and the thematic analysis were common to the five evaluations completed by the evaluation team at Manchester Metropolitan University, for both the interim and final evaluation reports. Key findings from this part of the evaluation were discussed with staff from Staying Close and the wider leaving care system at the end of the evaluation, both to validate the findings and also to feed into the conclusions, recommendations, and the key messages presented in this report.

Findings

The Staying Close offer

This evaluation has found (our analysis of the views expressed by individuals who participated in the research) that the Staying Close offer has worked well in North East Lincolnshire. It gives considerable agency to young people, and is also needs-based. Young people choose the type of support they feel is appropriate, which may involve attending drop-in sessions (which run twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays), having a support worker, or a combination of the two. They also have choices in terms of who will act as their support worker. Staff are able to respond to the individual young person's needs and offer bespoke packages of support, and provide responsive help and care as needed. One staff interviewee commented:

“...they don't have to have the support but the young people are encouraged just to take up the offer of the support and then like I say it is reviewed really regularly just to make sure that the young person feels comfortable with the support and what they are getting.”
(Interviewee 5, final phase)

Another staff member stated:

“But again, with the Staying Close they can put bespoke package around that young person. So, it could be anything from

doctors appointments to helping them with housing or just going for a coffee..... And that is what they need, especially when they have just left residential care...” (Interviewee 1, mid point)

Elements of the offer have changed over the lifetime of the pilot. We previously reported on several of these changes (Wright et al., 2019), and here focus on one aspect of the changing offer; accommodation. Originally, the pilot did not intend to provide accommodation, and there is no reference to accommodation or to skills needed to maintain accommodation in the original theory of change. As the pilot has progressed, an accommodation offer has developed; the pilot has made links with local housing providers, and acts as the tenant for a transitional period. The pilot provides tenancy sustainment support, enabling young people to develop practical skills, such as budgeting and cooking. One staff interviewee commented:

“...as they’re coming up to 17, we’re looking at taking on tenancies in the local authority’s name from the local housing partnership. So, the young people who are ready for their own property but not old enough and really feel that they want it, we’re finding properties for them, we’re putting a good package of support around it from the care home but the property is in the local authority’s name.”
(Interviewee 4, final phase)

One young person highlighted the transitional housing support provided by the North East Lincolnshire pilot:

“... just after February, so it’s a good few months and obviously waiting for the house to get changed and the tenancy to get changed over from the council to me, obviously I was paying rent-free so that helped a little bit.” (Peer interviewee, 8)

Interestingly, the importance of the accommodation offer may have changed over the lifetime of the pilot for staff members. In both the midpoint and final staff surveys, respondents were asked to comment on which policy objective they believed was most important for Staying Close. In the midpoint survey, three respondents (n=3/16) identified ‘accessing suitable and stable accommodation’ as the most important objective; in the final survey, no respondents (n=0/6) identified this objective². However, this was not a longitudinal survey, and we do not know if individual respondents have changed their minds over the period of the evaluation.

² Of the 6 respondents, 1 identified ‘improved health and wellbeing’, 4 answered ‘supported transition from care’, and 1 answered ‘improved social connections’ as the most important objective (7 options provided).

Further changes in the accommodation offer are planned for 2020/21, especially in how housing advice and support is provided. Work is also underway to develop a 'pod' offer (self-contained accommodation in the grounds of the children's home), building on this innovation attempted in the Bristol Staying Close pilot. Staff involved in the findings workshop stated that the accommodation offer was tailored to the needs and aspirations of individual young people, and that they had taken onboard and learnt from the challenges experienced by the Bristol team in relation to the pods.

Finally, it is important to note that Staying Close is just one part of a larger, complex leaving care system. Young people transitioning from children's homes to independent adulthood will be eligible for, and access, a range of different forms of support. This will include the leaving care team, their Personal Advisor, adult social services, contact with employment and training agencies, as well as a range of other interactions that other young people might experience.

Implementation successes and challenges

This evaluation has found, based on both our analysis and on the data provided by individuals (young people, staff, and wider stakeholders) that the pilot has been successfully implemented. The pilot has been well received by staff, and has contributed to the overall system of support for young people leaving care in the borough.

Several participants highlighted that the pilot implementation experienced some challenges, particularly in the early stages. One interviewee commented:

"I don't know what the word is – teething problems in terms of getting everything on the road. But we are well on the road now and we are doing some really good stuff." (Interviewee 2, mid point)

And one survey respondent suggested:

"Staying Close has been invaluable. However it is not without its teething problems." (Staff survey respondent, final phase)

Some concerns were raised by participants at the midpoint of the evaluation that there were still gaps in provision for some young people in or leaving care, particularly where individuals fell between eligibility criteria for different programmes/types of support. These concerns were echoed by two participants in the staff findings workshop, with the issue of mental health care and support as individuals move from children's to adult care being raised. There is also some evidence, particularly earlier on, of tensions between different parts of the leaving care system. One survey respondent commented on poor communication between different parts of the care systems, and differences in opinion about whether individual young people were ready for independent accommodation or training/education courses. Another survey respondent commented:

“The danger of undermining the leaving care team has to be carefully managed...” (Staff survey respondent, final phase)

This was an issue for discussion at the findings workshop held in March 2020. One participant suggested that the tension arose as people were ‘finding their feet’. Another suggested that Staying Close is a smaller, more intensive intervention compared to the larger caseloads of personal advisers and social workers, and that young people often chose to connect with Staying Close staff because of this and also because of existing connections with these staff.

Not all participants in this research agreed with the view that there were tensions between different parts of the leaving care system. Several participants stated that individuals from different parts of the local leaving care system worked well together. Other participants felt that these tensions had been resolved through the pilot’s implementation. One interviewee commented:

“We have a good relationship with the Through Care team most of the time as well. The PAs, the personal advisors, help out at the Sunday group.” (Interviewee 4, final phase)

Indeed, a common theme that emerges from several data sources is that the additional support provided by Staying Close complements and adds significantly to the leaving care system. This support was previously identified as being critical to the success of Staying Close (Wright et al., 2019); a finding which is reflected throughout this evaluation. One survey respondent stated that Staying Close provided:

“A lasting link with people who are special to them once they leave residential care, finding points of contact and help, supporting them as they move on.” (Staff survey respondent, final phase)

Several of the peer research interviewees commented that their first and most significant point of contact with the leaving care system was their Staying Close support worker. Respondents to the two young people’s surveys (n=6 in total) identified frequent, weekly contact with Staying Close (which may be in group or 1 to 1 basis, with a support worker or through the twice-weekly drop-in groups). This was also reflected by professionals involved; one interviewee commented:

“I definitely think the relationship thing is where they identify that one person. I think that is absolutely paramount.” (Interviewee 1, mid point)

Finally, a significant aspect of the relationship between young people transitioning from care and the leaving care system was raised at the findings workshop that does not feature in the other data generated by the evaluation. Several participants suggested that

the nature of the relationship between Staying Close workers and young people was different to that which young people experienced with support workers in residential home, and that this difference may generate tensions in the system. It was commented that 'permissions had changed', so that relationships developed in care could continue once a young person had left care. Several participants commented that children's homes were sterile environments where failure was not permitted, but that post-care, young people needed to be able to learn from failure. One participant commented that too much was expected from young people transitioning to independent adulthood, emphasising that transition was a journey experienced differently by each young person.

Expectations and experiences

The involvement of young people transitioning from children's homes was core to the design of this evaluation. Young people have been involved in the design process, though workshops in the scoping phase of the evaluation; as both peer research interviewers and peer research interviewees in the peer research work; through case study work; and through a survey conducted both at the mid-point and end-point of the evaluation. Here, we focus on their expectations and experiences, drawing on each of these different ways that young people were involved (particularly the peer research); in a later section of this report, we examine how Staying Close has given young people voice/control over their lives.

There is evidence from a number of sources that young people accessing Staying Close in North Lincolnshire experience several accommodation moves. These accommodation moves include changes in care placements (during care), as well as changes once they left care (and accessing Staying Close). Some of these changes may be positive moves; some of the young people involved speak about periods in transitional or supported housing before moving into independent accommodation. Some may be less positive. One peer interviewee explained:

"I left the care home, to an independent house on (name) when I was 16, so I think I was 16 and then I moved to (name) and was staying at one of their houses and I wanted to be around my area.....so I had to always keep coming up and down, (name). So they got mein anothercare home. I made a few mistakes, I could have gone back to that house but I didn't want to, I ended up going back to (name) house and then they gave me my two grand grant when I turned 18 then I moved into a house down (name) but now they offered me a house back at my old ...care home, where I can rent it."
(Peer interviewee 9, final phase)

Several peer interviewees identified a lack of independent living skills, and how Staying Close was helping them develop these skills. One commented:

“I’m shit with money, I’m shit with money so she helped me with budgeting, she helped me, if I run out of gas or electric or something, they’ll help me with that. But then they won’t do it every time. So, I’m not relying on them.” (Peer interviewee 8, final phase)

Overall, the young people involved in this research reported positive experiences of Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire. Further discussion of the positive experiences of young people involved in this research and who commented on their experiences is set out in chapter 7 of this report.

Innovation

The Staying Close offer appears to deliver some elements of support that existed before the pilot. This was recognised by participants in the theory of change workshop, although it was clear that there had been significant changes in how, for whom, and for how long support was provided now compared to before the introduction of Staying Close. Participants pointed out that before Staying Close, support was provided, but on an ad hoc basis, and in a less intensive way. One interviewee commented:

“For a long while, before Staying Close was in place, some of the care home workers had been keeping in touch with the young people, I won’t say secretively because that sounds wrong but unofficially, whereas this would give them the opportunity to be able to maintain those relationships. We still have care leavers that come back and ask for things.” (Interviewee 4, final phase)

The provision of post-leaving care support before the introduction of Staying Close was also acknowledged by several staff interviewees. Staff interviewed were clear that the pilot was about maintaining systematic contact with the young person transitioning from care, and allowing it to happen. Whilst contact between young people and staff members may have happened in the past, it was often ad hoc and on a voluntary basis. Not all young people received support, and there was inconsistency in support where it was provided. Through the pilot, systematic contact has now been offered to everyone and is formalised (through a co-produced Staying Close plan). It also ensures that other professionals are involved and aware of the plan and often fits well with the young person’s pathway plan.

Over and above this more formal and consistent approach, there are aspects of the Staying Close offer that are innovative. Indeed, one interviewee identified the drop-in sessions as a form of innovation, stating that:

“...the provision of twice-weekly drop-in sessions, which often include the preparation and sharing of meals, as well as weekly access to the

Fairshare food offer (similar to a foodbank). Such provision of food provides a strong incentive for young people to stay in touch with the project.” (Interviewee 3, final phase)

A finding from the young people’s findings workshop at the end of evaluation and mentioned by several young people in the peer research interviews was that the drop-in sessions are valued by care experienced young people in the borough. They provide a social space for young people, as well as an opportunity to raise important issues for discussion. But the drop-in sessions are also a vehicle for delivering on the pilot’s independent living objectives. An important part of the work of the health and wellbeing practitioner is around developing independent living skills. This skills development takes place through the drop-in sessions, focusing on cooking skills, budgeting skills, and dealing with living independently. This work is sometimes one to one, and sometimes via group work. It was also noted at the findings workshop that children’s homes are increasingly working on skills development before individuals leave care, reflecting a culture change in the care system (generated in part by Staying Close) towards supporting transition to independent adulthood. The health and wellbeing practitioner’s role was seen as an innovative and successful part of the pilot.

Finally, it is worth noting that the North East Lincolnshire Council was nominated in the innovation category for the 2020 Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards because of the work of the Staying Close team.

Limitations

The research presented here provides three snapshots of young people’s, staff and wider stakeholders’ perceptions, at different points in the implementation of Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire. It draws on a limited number of interviews and surveys. It is cognisant of wider changes in the leaving care landscape in the borough, but is focused specifically on one part of this system.

Conclusions

This evaluation has found, based on both our analysis and on the data provided by individuals (young people, staff, and wider stakeholders, that Staying Close has been successfully implemented in North East Lincolnshire. It is making a significant contribution to the leaving care system in the borough, and is valued by young people accessing this type of support. It is clear that the Staying Close offer has developed and changed to reflect local needs and learning. In particular, the development of an accommodation offer is significant. The Staying Close team has worked hard to ensure that young people can access suitable accommodation, and this includes some innovative and effective features. One example is where the Council acts as tenant while the young person gains experience of, and confidence in, managing an independent

home. This, combined with the provision of practical tenancy sustainment and independent living skills, means that young people can benefit from transitional housing and support without the need to move between different accommodations. The pilot provides flexible and needs-based support to young people as they transition from children's homes to independent adulthood. In particular, the three forms of support (group only, support worker only, and group and support worker) provides choice and flexibility for young people.

6. Outcomes evaluation

Methods summary

There are two elements to this part of the evaluation. First, data provided by the North East Lincolnshire team were analysed to understand the distance travelled by individuals accessing Staying Close in the borough on a number of key outcome areas. Secondly, the evaluation team used contribution analysis (Mayne, 2011) to assess whether Staying Close could contribute to the outcomes expected from the programme.

Contribution analysis

To understand the outcomes achieved in North East Lincolnshire, we used an alternative form of impact evaluation called contribution analysis (Mayne, 2001). Contribution analysis is a structured approach to understanding and evidencing whether, and to what extent, observed changes in outcomes are a consequence of the intervention being evaluated. It is designed specifically for interventions such as those being evaluated here, as it is designed to assess impact of in areas of causal complexity. The aim of contribution analysis is to provide a credible, evidence-based narrative of the contribution that an intervention makes to any changes in outcomes, and how and why it works in this way. It is a theory-driven approach; a key part of contribution analysis is to set out the outcomes that are expected to arise from the intervention, and how – the pathways or causal mechanisms by which – the intervention is intended to work. As such, developing a theory of change of the evaluand is an important first step in undertaking contribution analysis (Delahais and Toulemonde, 2012).

Contribution analysis is undertaken in six steps (Mayne, 2001). Table 3 sets out these six steps, how each steps has been undertaken in this evaluation, and what types of data (whether or not these data were generated by this evaluation) were used to address each step.

Table 3: Contribution analysis steps and their application to this evaluation

Step	Explanation	Data/evidence
Set out questions to be asked	The research questions that underpin the evaluation. These were set out in the original proposal to DfE and are given in chapter 3 of this report.	
Develop theory of change	An initial theory of change was developed by North East Lincolnshire Council as part of its bid for funding for the pilot. This was reviewed and further developed through a Theory of Change workshop during the scoping phase of the evaluation. Further work has been done by the pilot. The most recent version of the theory of change is set out in chapter 3 of this report.	Theory of Change dated November 2019 Theory of Change workshop
Gather existing evidence	The evaluation team completed a structured literature review to identify empirical evidence around programmes/interventions aimed at supporting young people leaving care as they transition to independent adulthood. This literature review focused on evidence around the policy objectives set by DfE.	Literature review
Assemble and assess the contribution narrative	Drawing on the literature review, the evaluation team assessed whether interventions such as Staying Close might contribute to the outcome objectives set out in the pilot's theory of change. There were four outcomes from this assessment: (1) string evidence, that is it is plausible that an intervention such as Staying Close could contribute to the expected outcomes (2) weak evidence, that is there is some evidence to suggest it might be plausible (3) there is no	Theory of change identifies the outcomes expected from Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire Literature review used as evidence to examine the plausibility of Staying Close making a contribution to outcomes in these areas

	evidence to suggest it might be plausible (4) there is evidence to suggest that it is not plausible ³	
Gather extra evidence	This stage examines whether changes in outcomes were observed, and whether evidence generated through the evaluation suggests that Staying Close might have made a contribution to these observed changes	Distance travelled analysis Interviews, surveys, and documentary analysis conducted through the evaluation
Conclude the contribution narrative	Taking all of the evidence together – the extant evidence about interventions similar to Staying Close and the evidence generated about Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire – is it plausible to conclude that Staying Close made a contribution to the changes in outcomes observed?	Synthesis of steps 3, 4 and 5 of this analysis

³ It is important to stress the difference between no evidence of plausibility and evidence that it is not plausible. The former is an assessment of the evidence base; a lack of evidence means that it is not possible to examine the likely efficacy of the intervention. The latter is about the intervention itself; that the existing evidence suggests that the intervention will not achieve or contribute to the outcomes expected of it.

Findings

Existing evidence base

The theory of change developed by North East Lincolnshire identifies outcomes in nine areas, of which seven are policy objectives established by the Department for Education. These seven outcomes are: (1) are more independent; (2) have a stable home; (3) continue to engage in EET; (4) have strong supportive relationships; (5) continue to engage with health services; (6) increased resilience; and (7) feel less lonely/improved wellbeing. The two pilot outcomes that do not correspond to national policy outcomes are (a) become a peer mentor; and (b) make a positive contribution to society. The analysis outlined here only focuses on the seven pilot outcomes that relate to national policy outcomes, as only national outcomes were within the scope of the evaluation commissioned by the Department for Education.

The evaluation team undertook a structured literature review, examining empirical literature around the outcomes expected and achieved from programmes or interventions targeted at support young people as they transition from care to independent adulthood. This literature provides a view on whether it is plausible that an intervention such as Staying Close could contribute to positive change in the outcomes expected by the Department for Education and covered by the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot.

Table 4 summarises the findings from the structured literature review. These findings focus on whether the extant evidence (from published, empirical studies) indicates that an intervention such as Staying Close could contribute to positive change in the outcomes expected for young people transitioning from care to independent adulthood. It is an assessment of whether, *in theory*, there is evidence that it could be effective. This analysis is the third step, 'gathering existing evidence', set out in table 3.

Table 4: Does the extant evidence suggest that Staying Close could contribute to outcomes

Pilot outcome	DfE outcome	Plausibility assessment
More independent	Are ready for independent living	Strong evidence
Have a stable home	Are in accommodation that is suitable and stable	Strong evidence
Continue to engage in EET	Are in education, employment or training	Weak evidence
Have strong supportive relationships	Report good social connections	Strong evidence
Continue to engage with health services	Are physically healthy	No evidence
Increased resilience	Are resilient to unsafe behaviours	No evidence
Feel less lonely/improved wellbeing	Have good emotional health, wellbeing and resilience	Weak evidence

Having used the existing evidence base to assess whether an intervention such as Staying Close might, in theory, contribute to the outcomes expected by the Department of Education and the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot, the next stage of the analysis was to examine whether changes in outcomes were observed, and whether evidence generated through the evaluation, suggests that Staying Close might have made a contribution to these observed changes. This stage of the analysis draws on two types of evidence. The first examines whether there has been positive change in the relevant outcomes. Data provided by the pilot have been analysed to identify the distance travelled by young people accessing Staying Close support. The second part of this analysis draws on the extant evidence, the interviews, workshops, surveys, and case study work undertaken throughout the evaluation to develop a contribution narrative about Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire.

Distance travelled

Two types of data were provided by the North East Lincolnshire team. Individual level data were provided about the thirty seven (n=37) individuals eligible for Staying Close services in the area, of whom twenty two (n=22/37) received some form of Staying Close support during the period of the evaluation. These data give an insight into the age and sex of young people eligible for, and accessing Staying Close services, their care history, the type of support they are accessing, and data in relation to several outcomes. These data provide a single snapshot and do not allow for a measure of change over time. The second set of data were 'score cards' giving an aggregate level view of progress towards outcomes. They are three-monthly summaries of Staying Close activities and outcomes. Together, these two datasets provide a rich insight into the progress of the scheme and the outcomes being achieved by young people accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire, and both datasets have been used to assess the distance travelled presented in this report. In addition, the young people's surveys undertaken at the midpoint and final phases of the evaluation includes questions that relate to DfE expected outcomes, including two questions that measure wellbeing.

A detailed explanation of these data, and the outcome of the distance travelled analysis, is provided in Appendix 1 of this report. These findings are summarised in Table 5.

Table 5 Summary table outlining the distance travelled by project outcome

Pilot outcome	DfE outcome	Evidence of positive change in outcomes (distance travelled)
More independent	Are ready for independent living	Not sufficient quantitative data from which to make an assessment
Have a stable home	Are in accommodation that is suitable and stable	<p>The proportion of young people recorded as living in supported housing fluctuated over the lifetime of the pilot, but increased overall. The proportion of young people recorded as living in independent tenancies increased for the first five quarters, and then fell in the final quarter. Overall, it fell over the lifetime of the pilot. This might be taken together as a proxy measure of having a stable home, at the beginning of the pilot, 40 per cent of young people were in a stable home and at the end of the pilot, this proportion was just over fifty percent (from 10 out of 25 to 12 out of 22).</p> <p>The proportion of young people in a placement or foyer fluctuated over the lifetime of the pilot, but fell overall. The proportion of young people who were recorded as being homeless or in insecure accommodation fluctuated over the lifetime of the pilot, but increased overall. This might be taken together as a proxy measure of not having a stable home.</p>
Continue to engage in EET	Are in education, employment or training	<p>The proportion of young people recorded as being in education, employment or training (EET) fluctuated over the lifetime pilot, but increased overall. At the beginning of the pilot, 8 out of 25 young people were in EET. At the end of the pilot, 11 out of 22 young people were in EET.</p> <p>There was a fall in the proportion of young people recorded as not being in education, employment or training (NEET) over the lifetime of the pilot</p>
Have strong supportive relationships	Report good social connections	Not sufficient quantitative data from which to make an assessment

Continue to engage with health services	Are physically healthy	Not sufficient quantitative data from which to make an assessment
Increased resilience	Are resilient to unsafe behaviours	Not sufficient quantitative data from which to make an assessment
Feel less lonely/improved wellbeing	Have good emotional health, wellbeing and resilience	Not sufficient quantitative data from which to make an assessment

As the analysis set out in Table 5 illustrates, there are two outcome areas in which distance travelled can be evidenced. In relation to education, employment and training, this analysis suggests positive change was experienced by some young people during their time with Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire. In relation to stable housing, there was fluctuation over the lifetime of the pilot in terms of outcomes achieved, but overall there appears that positive change was experienced by some young people during their time with Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire.

Contribution narratives

The two outcomes for which distance travelled (change in outcomes) can be evidenced also have some evidence, in the extant literature, that suggests that an intervention such as Staying Close could make a contribution to the change observed change. This analysis suggests:

- for **stable housing**, the extant evidence suggests it is plausible that Staying Close contributes to positive change (there is strong evidence), and the distance travelled analysis suggests fluctuation over the lifetime of the pilot but overall positive outcomes experienced by young people accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire; and
- for **education, employment and training**, the extant evidence suggests some evidence that Staying Close might make a contribution to positive outcomes (there is weak evidence), and the distance travelled analysis suggests that positive outcomes are experienced by young people accessing Staying Close in the area.

Mechanisms

The mechanisms through which the outcomes might be achieved are not explicitly articulated in the pilot theory of change. However, it is clear from the interviews, surveys, and workshops undertaken as part of this evaluation that strong, positive and supportive relationships between Staying Close staff and young people are seen as an important mechanism through which young people are able to achieve positive outcomes in their housing, education, employment and training, and other areas. This mechanism includes giving agency, as set out in chapter 5, to young people and providing appropriate accommodation in which to feel safe to develop and test practical skills for independent adulthood.

Stable housing

The extant literature suggests that the concept of stable housing is much contested in the academic literature, and is poorly conceptualised, with no standard means of measuring stability (Frederick et al., 2014). There are both objective and subjective aspects of stability. Objective measures might include type of tenure, length of residence (Tsemberis et al., 2007), and subjective aspects of stable housing include personal assessments of housing stability. There is also a significant degree of interconnectivity between stable housing and preparedness for independent living; maintaining stability will, in part, depend on the application of practical skills in budgeting and cooking, as well as more intangible skills such as coping with independence (Haggman-Laitila et al., 2019). Evidence suggests that programmes/interventions to support young people as they transition from care to independent adulthood can be effective in producing positive housing outcomes (Heerde et al., 2018)⁴, but support must be more than minimal.

Evidence from this evaluation suggests that as the pilot has progressed in North East Lincolnshire, an accommodation offer has developed; the pilot has made links with local housing providers, and acts as the tenant for a transitional period. The pilot provides tenancy sustainment support, enabling young people to develop practical skills, such as budgeting and cooking. Further changes in the accommodation offer are planned for 2020/21 in how housing advice and support is provided. Work is also underway to develop a 'pod' offer (self-contained accommodation in the grounds of the children's home), building on this innovation attempted in the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot. Overall, there is clear and sustained work by the pilot around stable housing, including a focus on the development of young people's practical skills for independent living, the tenancy support provided, the use of transitional housing options (such as the council acting as tenant until the young

⁴ It is worth stressing that most of the studies covered by this meta-analysis are from the USA. This reflects a lack of empirical impact studies in the UK and elsewhere.

person is assessed as being ready to hold a tenancy themselves) and the work with local housing providers.

The quarterly score cards provided by the North East Lincolnshire team include information on the housing/tenure status of people accessing Staying Close in the borough. These data can be used as a somewhat crude proxy measure of this outcome. Drawing on these data, if we assume that supported tenancies, independent tenancies, and living with family are safe and suitable forms of accommodation (and, conversely, that being homeless or in secure accommodation, or being in a placement/foyer is not), we can provide a proxy estimate of the change in this outcome measure. Table 6 illustrates this in terms of absolute numbers, and Figure 2 illustrates the relative proportions.

Table 6: Numbers of Staying Close recipients in safe and suitable accommodation (estimates)

	Nov 18 - Jan 19	Feb 19 - April 19	May 19 - July 19	Aug 19 - Oct 19	Nov 19 - Jan 20
Safe and secure	10	17	12	13	12
Not safe or secure	15	10	11	12	10

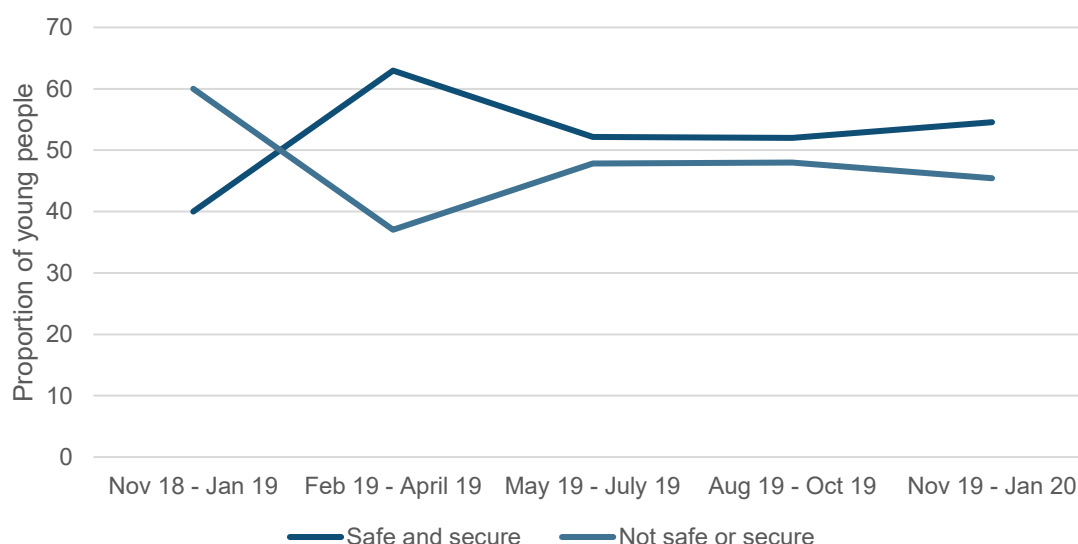


Figure 2: Changes in proportions of Staying Close recipients in safe and suitable accommodation (estimates)

This analysis suggests a somewhat mixed picture in relation to this outcome. A simple pre and post comparison would suggest a slight increase in the numbers and proportion in safe and suitable accommodation between November 2018 and January 2020. The analysis does suggest, however, that there were fluctuations over the lifetime of the pilot in this outcome.

In the staff surveys (midpoint and final phase), respondents were asked a series of questions about the outcomes expected from the pilot and which were most important, whether outcomes were being achieved, and whether these outcomes would be achieved if Staying Close were not available (known as a counterfactual). Twenty two people responded to these surveys (n=16 at the midpoint and n=6 in the final phase survey). There was overall agreement in both surveys that stable housing was an outcome objective of the pilot (n=14/16 and n=5/6 respondents), though it was not seen as the most important objective. Those stating it was an important objective were n=3/16 in the mid point survey and n=0/6 respondents in the final survey, suggesting that most respondents did not see this as important. Overall, respondents' views were that positive change in this outcome was being delivered, and that this would be much less likely to be achieved without Staying Close (n=4/6 and n=14/16 respondents thought it was much less or less likely that this outcome would be achieved without Staying Close).

Given all of this (the extant literature, the distance travelled analysis, and the further evidence from this evaluation), we conclude that the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot should be able to contribute (in theory), and has contributed (in practice), to positive outcomes in relation to stable housing.

Education, employment and training (EET)

The extant literature makes clear that young people leaving care are less likely than their non-care experienced peers to be in EET, and also have poorer education outcomes (Ozan et al., 2020). Evidence suggests that interventions aimed at supporting young people as they transition from care to independent adulthood may improve EET outcomes, if they are provided with the opportunity to stay longer in care until they have completed courses (Del Valle et al., 2008; Quinn et al., 2017); this provides a safety net and can lessen or at least pause the instability and uncertainty that accompanies transition and that can disrupt achievement in education or training (Munro et al., 2012). EET can facilitate an easier transition into adulthood as this gives young people practical skills and financial independence with which to seek and maintain independence in adulthood (Häggman-Laitila et al., 2019).

This evaluation has identified that the pilot involves a number of activities focused on EET. These include practical skills development in the Thursday and Sunday drop-in groups (such as CVs), work around accessing education and training courses, and

support around further and higher education opportunities. Support workers also provide practical support for job interviews, which includes interview skills and assuring attendance. The pilot also runs a traineeship programme, aimed at developing peer mentorship skills, with which three young people are engaged.

The distance travelled analysis suggests positive outcomes in EET with both an increase in the proportion of the Staying Close population in EET and a reduction of those not in education, employment or training (NEET). Table 7 presents the data in relation to education, employment and training. These data have been extrapolated from the quarterly 'score cards' provided by the North East Lincolnshire team.

Table 7: Number of young people in education, employment or training each quarter, November 2018 to January 2020

	Nov 18 - Jan 19	Feb 19 - April 19	May 19 - July 19	Aug 19 - Oc 19	Nov 19 - Jan 20
EET	8	12	13	10	11
NEET	10	10	6	6	3
Other	7	5	4	7	9

Overall, these data do suggest an increase in both the number and proportion of all those receiving Staying Close who are in education, employment or training between November 2018 and January 2020, although these numbers and proportions do fluctuate between quarters, with both peaking in the period May to July 2019. There is a much clearer picture in relation to the number and proportion recorded as being not in education, employment or training (NEET), which has fallen consistently over the period. The 'other' category represents missing data in the score cards.

Over and above this analysis, there were also a series of questions in the staff surveys (midpoint and final phase) about outcomes. Twenty two people responded to these surveys (n=16 at the midpoint and n=6 in the final phase survey). There was overall agreement in both surveys that EET was an outcome objective of the pilot (n=13/16 and n=3/6 respondents), and no one saw it as the most important (n=0/16 and n=0/6 respondents). Overall, when asked whether Staying Close was achieving EET outcomes, respondents had very mixed views, as evidenced in Figure 2.

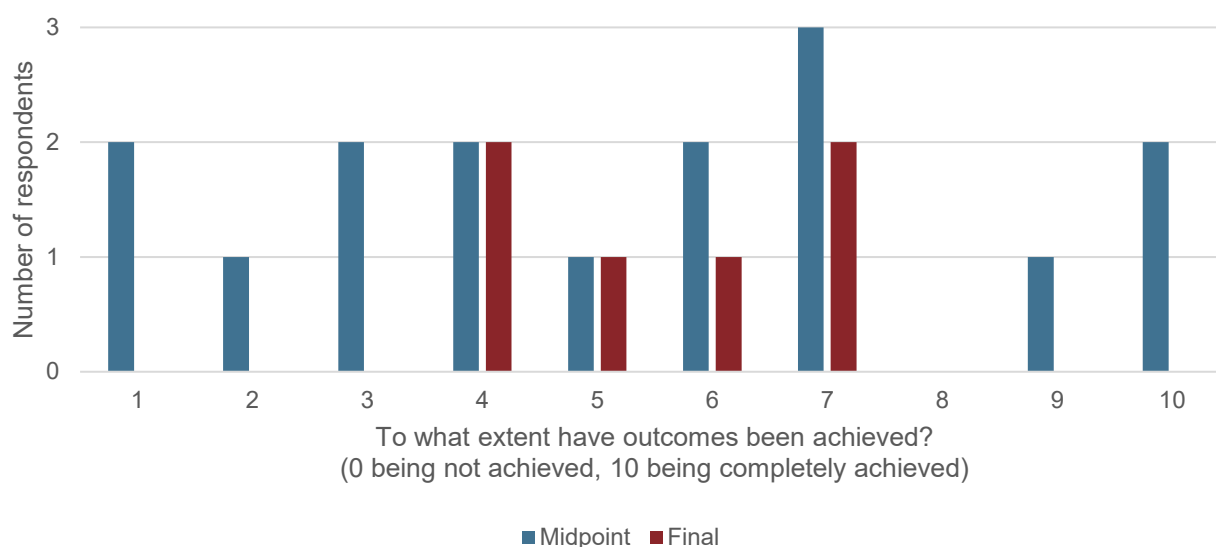


Figure 3: Respondents' views on whether Staying Close achieved EET outcomes

There was much more agreement between respondents that EET outcomes would be less or much less likely to be achieved without Staying Close. In the midpoint survey, twelve respondents (n=12/16) had this view, with four (n=4) stating that it was neither more or less likely. In the final survey, five respondents (n=5/6) stated that it is much less or less likely, and one (n=1/6) that it was more likely that EET outcomes would be achieved without Staying Close.

Given all of this (the extant literature, the distance travelled analysis, and the further evidence from this evaluation), we conclude that the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot should (in theory) be able to contribute, and has (in practice) contributed, to positive outcomes in relation to education, employment and training.

Limitations

There are two limitations we would like to highlight here. The first relates to extant evidence on interventions and programmes design to support young people as they transition from children's homes to independent adulthood. There is a lack of empirical evidence that identifies that factors that affect successful transition, or that identifies the effectiveness of different types of programme or intervention. The evidence of impact and effectiveness that does exist is largely drawn from US studies, and not from studies from here in the UK. This means that the first analytical stage of the contribution analysis – where it is plausible that an intervention like Staying Close might contribute to positive change in outcomes – is based largely on US evidence as there is a lack of UK evidence around the impact of interventions such as Staying Close. This means that the evidence that does not take account of

the UK context, legal framework, or care landscape, which raises questions about the extent to which these findings are applicable in the UK (Atkinson and Hyde, 2019).

The second limitation is around the distance travelled analysis. The data provided were limited as they did not cover all of the outcomes expected within the Theory of Change. Therefore, conclusions drawn around this data are limited. We make a recommendation about this in the 'conclusions and recommendations' chapter of this report.

Conclusions

The distance travelled analysis and contribution analysis presented here suggest that the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot could and did make a contribution to positive outcomes in relation to stable housing, and could and did make a contribution to positive outcomes in relation to education, employment and training.

We are unable to draw any conclusions in relation to the other outcomes expected from this pilot. The extant evidence seems to suggest that an intervention or programme such as Staying Close could make positive contributions in the other outcome areas targeted by North East Lincolnshire, but the lack of outcome data means that we are unable to complete the analysis in these areas. We make a recommendation about this in the 'conclusions and recommendations' chapter of this report.

7. Voice of young people

Methods summary

A key aim of this evaluation was to give a voice to young people leaving, or preparing to leave, children's homes in North East Lincolnshire. Young people were given voice through being involved in the design of the evaluation, as researchers, as research participants, and by involving young people in the co-production of the conclusions and recommendations arising from this research.

We have previously reported on the role that young people played in the evaluation design (Wright et al., 2019). The views of young people have been intergrated with those of other research participants in the findings of this evaluation, and have been particularly important to the findings around the sections on the Staying Close offer and expectations and experience in both this and the interim report. In this section, we focus on two further aspects of the voice of young people; the role that co-production has played in the pilot, and the outcome of a workshop with young people to discuss and validate the findings of this evaluation, and to co-produce the conclusions and recommendations made here.

Findings

Voice of young people in North East Lincolnshire

Young people have a voice in the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot, both as individuals and as a group. This voice is expressed in a number of ways. Young people are involved in making key decisions about the support they receive from Staying Close. Young people choose the type of support they feel is appropriate, which may involve attending drop-in sessions (which run twice a week, on Thursdays and Sundays), having a support worker, or a combination of the two. They also have choices in terms of who will act as their support worker. Several young people involved in this research highlighted their agency as being important to them, both in their choice of Staying Close support worker, and also in getting support from Staying Close in preference to other parts of the leaving care system in the borough. One participant talked about their Through Care worker having a large case load and always being busy (peer interviewee 9), another spoke about how they were always able to contact their Staying Close support worker (peer interviewee 7). When discussing expectations about their relationships with different parts of the leaving care system, one participant commented that Staying Close was different because:

“I think because they listen to you, they listen to, and I know that I would much rather...” (*Peer interviewee, 9*)

Young people are also given voice (the chance to speak about, comment on, participate in, or otherwise speak about) collectively, in a number of different ways. Evidence from this evaluation suggests that this is done informally, through discussions at the Thursday and Sunday drop-in groups. These drop-in groups were clearly important to participants in this evaluation. One commented:

“It’s a group for young care leavers, to come and get support and to come on Thursdays and Sundays to meet up and have dinner and have a catch up really and just...” (*Peer interviewee 7*)

Another participant identified the role that the group session played in terms of the voice of young people. When asked about feedback, this participant commented:

“Yes. And if for any reason we can’t do something that’s my idea, she’ll tell me why as well so I don’t just think no, it’s a shit idea.” (*Peer interviewee, 8*)

A third participant commented:

“Yes, Staying Close, they have this group on, once a week, well twice a week.....Just go, we chat, talk to whoever is there, talk to them if we’ve got any problems, pretty much have tea.” (*Peer interviewee, 9*)

There were five responses in total to the young people’s survey in North East Lincolnshire, three to the survey conducted at the midpoint of the evaluation, and two in the final phase. The survey asked respondents whether they had been involved in changing local services for young people leaving care; across the two surveys, one respondent answered that they had been involved, one that they were not, and three that they could not remember.

Voice of young people on the findings, implications and conclusions from this evaluation

The key aim was that the evaluation should give voice to young people leaving, or preparing to leave, children’s homes. Giving voice means more than involving young people as research participants; it also means involving them in decisions about the research design (through workshops conducted at the beginning of the evaluation);

as researchers (through the peer research part of the evaluation); and by gathering their views on the findings of the evaluation, and identifying the implications and conclusions that follow from these findings.

The voice of young people in relation to the evaluation's implications and conclusions was given through a workshop conducted on 12th March 2020. The workshop was facilitated by a member of the evaluation team. The workshop was conducted as part of the weekly Thursday drop-in session and involved nine young people, all of whom were either accessing Staying Close or were aware of the service. The findings presented here are based solely on the views expressed by young people who attended the workshop.

The workshop involved two parts. The first focused on three key findings from the evaluation, giving an opportunity for young people to reflect and comment on these findings, both in group discussion and through individual feedback. The second part focused on the implications and conclusions drawn from these findings, using an exercise known as 'stop, start, continue'.

Three key findings

These findings were presented as a series of handouts, and through group discussion. The three findings were summarised as: (1) young people have choice and are listened to about how they use Staying Close, reflecting the findings around the Staying Close offer outlined in Chapter 5 (co-production); (2) the drop-in sessions are good, reflecting the findings around innovation outlined in chapter 5; and (3) Staying Close works well and makes a difference, reflecting the findings around outcomes outlined in Chapter 6.

Overall, the young people involved in the workshop stated that these findings were consistent with their own experiences of accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire. There were a few comments around how young people had choices about who they contacted in the leaving care system, and about the type of support they received. One person commented that the level of support should be more flexible, to take account of changing needs. The finding around the drop-in sessions generated a number of comments, several of which focused on food (meals are provided at the drop-in sessions, and there is also access to food parcels, which are provided at the cost of £1.50 per parcel). There was general agreement that the cooked food was good, and one person commented that it was helpful to have times when they did not need to cook for themselves. The drop-in sessions were identified as an opportunity to talk to staff and other young people about experiences and challenges, and also to 'have a rant' in a space in which views were listened to and respected. Two people agreed that the drop-in sessions provided a non-judgemental space, which they valued.

The finding around Staying Close working well generated fewer comments than the drop-in session finding. One person commented that the Sunday drop-in session was effective because it was held in a children's centre, allowing accessing to toys and a safe space for children. There were further comments about the non-judgemental approach taken by Staying Close, and how the emotional and practical support helped them deal with everyday life outside of children's homes. It was generally agreed by a number of participants at the workshop, in response to a question about a comment made by one participant, that Staying Close made a significant and positive difference.

The second part of the workshop focused on implications, conclusions and recommendations, using a 'stop, start, continue' exercise. This involved both a group discussion and also individual, written feedback, focused on single areas where Staying Close should stop doing something, should start doing something, and should continue doing something. The 'stop' discussion and individual feedback largely focused on the actions of young people attending the drop-in sessions, with comments on the need to stop arguing and stop damaging property at the children's centre, as well as the need to recognise that some young people attending drop-in sessions might be experiencing trauma or facing a particularly difficult time. The 'start' discussions and individual feedback raised several suggestions, many of which were focused on activities such as organising more day trips, greater variety in the cooked food offered at the drop-in sessions, arts and crafts, and "having big teddies available". One person suggested the provision of a chill-out space, so that young people could take time out when needed or have a space to sleep; this suggestion was welcomed by several of the workshop's participants. The issue of flexibility in the level of support provided was raised again here; two participants commented that less support might be needed at certain times, but more support at other times. Another person's written comment was that help was needed when they were living on their own.

The 'continue' discussion and individual feedback also identified some very practical suggestions, largely focused on the drop-in sessions. Several of these were food-focused, both in terms of the fair share food parcels, and the cooked food provided. One person commented that eating together provided a welcomed social aspect to the drop-in sessions. Several of the comments are summed up by one of the individual written comments, which was that Staying Close should continue 'bringing people together'.

Limitations

The numbers of young people involved in this research are small: six people participated in the evaluation design co-production workshop, five responses were

received to the surveys, three people were involved in peer research, and nine were involved in the findings workshop. These small numbers reflect the size of the overall population of young people using Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire (n=23), and the well-noted challenges of engaging young people leaving care in research.

Conclusions

A key aim of this evaluation was to give a voice to young people leaving, or preparing to leave, children's homes in North East Lincolnshire. Young people were involved in the design of the evaluation, as researchers, as research participants, and were also involved in the co-production of the conclusions and recommendations arising from this research. Their views, experiences, and the outcomes they achieved are presented throughout this and previous reports on this evaluation.

This chapter has focused on two specific aspects of the voice of young people in the evaluation. The first of these is the role of co-production in Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire. The conclusion drawn from this analysis is that young people have a voice in the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot, both as individuals and as a group. They are involved in making key decisions about the support they receive from Staying Close. Young people involved in this research felt that they could voice their views, that their insights were important, and that they were treated in a supportive and non-judgemental manner.

The findings here also come from a workshop held at the end of the evaluation, to discuss findings with, and gained views on implications of and conclusions from, these findings. The workshop involved nine people with experience of leaving residential care in the borough. Overall, those involved in the workshop viewed Staying Close positively and as having made a significant contribution to their transition to independent adulthood.

8. Cost analysis

Methods

The overall aim of this element of the evaluation was to gather information on the costs of the Staying Close Cost pilot that are additional to those costs which would have been accrued had the pilot not been running. Additionality is the guiding principle of cost capture, requiring a comparison of the costs of the pilot to the situation had the pilot not been running.

The objective of the cost evaluation was to provide an assessment of the full cost of the pilot, taking into account direct, indirect and absorbed costs, and by augmenting existing sources of cost data with information based on the experience of those implementing the pilot. This was necessary because a proportion of the costs were absorbed into existing budgets, for example, Local Authority budgets and existing office accommodation provision. Therefore accurate costs could not be obtained from a simple analysis of relevant accounts.

A secondary objective was to comment on the value for money of the Staying Close Cost more generally. However, as outlined below, this was far from straightforward due to variations in throughput and the absence of an appropriate counterfactual. As we note below, there is evidence the project may break even, however this is a matter for further research.

Cost capture methods

The cost capture process involved three methods:

- cost-capture questionnaires completed by key stakeholders, followed by further liaison as required;
- triangulation of interview data with existing data sources such as accounts data where available; and
- comparison of quantitative data sources and qualitative interview material to determine adequacy of coverage of cost points and estimation of the likely missing cost points as required.

Costs captured

The range of costs captured included:

- capital costs (including IT equipment);
- running costs (rent, utilities, maintenance, insurance, subcontracts and so on);

- staff related costs (relocation, recruitment, training, salary and time spent);
- absorbed costs, where the costs of the pilot have been absorbed by cross-subsidy from existing budgets, from existing surplus capacity or from staff goodwill; and
- other costs of Staying Close, for example, briefing groups and transportation.

Findings

In Table 8, we provide estimates of the setup and running costs of the pilot. We break the costs down into three types:

- pilot setup costs – costs which we would expect to see incurred once irrespective of the number of young people on the pilot: £20,075.
- pilot annual costs – costs we regard as fixed irrespective of the number of young people on the pilot: £187,697 per annum.
- pilot total costs – amounting, by March 2020, to £489,318.

This means that:

- over the period of one year (that is to say, ignoring set up costs) the cost of Staying Close delivery to each of these young people is £7,508 (that is, per annum and per individual);
- over the intervention as a whole (from the start of the pilot to March 2020) and ignoring setup costs, the cost per young person is estimated to be £18,770; and
- over the intervention as a whole, (to March 2020), and including setup costs, the cost per young person is estimated to be £19,573.

Table 8: Pilot costs

Category	Cost	Per annum	Total ⁵
Project Setup Costs			£20,075
Capital Costs			
IT equipment: PCs, printers, networking, &c.	£6,222		
Accommodation costs	–		
Furniture costs	£11,618		
Vehicle, transportation costs	£1,110		
Staff Related Costs			
Costs of Relocation of staff	N/A		
Costs of recruiting staff:	£1,125		
Training Costs and Other Preparatory Events	–		
Project Running Costs (per annum, except where noted)		£187,697	£469,243
Staff Salary Costs			
Management Staff 1FTE	£44,400		
Staying Close Coordinator 1FTE	£31,388		
Staying Close Wellbeing Worker 1FTE	£36,626		
Participation Officer 1FTE	£27,000		
Staying Close Trainee FT for a 6-months	£14,601		
Staying Close Trainee FT for a 6-months	£14,602		
Non-staff costs			
Telephone/Broadband &c. Bills	£7,200		
Annual rental for drop-in group premises	£4,680		
Travel costs	£3,200		
Ongoing training - Health and well being qualification (two years)	£8,000		
Total costs to March 2020			£489,318

5

Estimated to March 2020.

A more detailed breakdown of these estimates is provided in Appendix 2, which includes details of the basis of individual benefit estimates.

Benefits estimates

The outcomes expected from the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot are intended to include:

- more independence;
- having a stable home;
- continuing to engage in EET;
- having strong supportive relationships;
- continuing to engage with health services; and
- increased resilience.

Table 9 summarises the potential savings to the state and society (that is, the likely cost to the public purse had the pilot not been running). This analysis suggests that the potential benefits to the public purse of economic costs of poorer outcomes previously experienced by young people leaving care are significant, and therefore there is significant scope (subject to demonstrating the impact of Staying Close, and effective cost savings measures being undertaken) for cost savings.

Limitations

The analysis presented here is based on a number of assumptions, and on cost data provided by the pilot. The pilot costs and benefits, compared to alternative provision, are highly sensitive to changes in these assumptions and the accuracy of the cost data provided.

The analysis of the potential costs and benefits that would be incurred in the absence of Staying Close does not take into account the provision of some support – on an informal and ad hoc basis – prior to the implementation of the pilot. It is simply not possible, because of the nature of this previous provision, to estimate its likely costs.

Finally, in the absence of evidence around the impact of Staying Close, and the lack of complete knowledge of the support which was previously in place, it is not possible to estimate the likely additional level of costs avoided or benefits derived from its provision. It is also not possible accurately to estimate the level of change that would need to take place for the costs of the pilot to be covered by the benefits generated.

Conclusions

Although there is no obvious counterfactual we may employ in the case of the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot, the level of the costs which might be saved if young people are diverted from a range of negative outcomes are significant. It seems reasonable to suppose, in the event that Staying Close could be demonstrated to have an impact on the outcomes expected, that the benefits generated might be at least be equal to the costs incurred (that is, would break even). However, further research is required to determine the actual scale of the savings made.

Table 9: Benefits estimates

Outcome expected	Cost of alternative provision/likely outcome	Comment
Improved independent living skills/having stable home	Homelessness £26,000 per year Local authority residential care £156,000 per year	The major cost to society which might be avoided by those young people in the Staying Close pilot is homelessness. In the absence of Staying Close might be the cost of Local Authority Residential Care, which may cost up to ¹¹ £3,000 per week. It is clear that it would take few weeks in residential care averted to have the intervention break even at that rate.
Stable Education, Employment or Training	£72,000 lifetime costs of being NEET	The public finance costs of a young person who is not in education, employment or training (NEET) over the course of their life have been estimated to be ⁶ £72,000. The cost to society as a whole, including to the young person, has been estimated to be ¹⁰ £133,500. The cost is increased by nearly 100% if we compare the average life outcomes of a NEET young person with the average outcomes of a graduate (on average).
Better relationships management	Cost of A&E - £129 Costs of a visit to a GP - £43	There is no clear indicator we might use as a proxy in a situation such as this. We might take, as proxies, the reduction in the likelihood of a teen pregnancy, the potential of reduction in the probability of substance abuse, and a potential reduction in criminal activity in the areas of

⁶ Updated for inflation from Coles, B., Godfrey, C., Keung, A., Parrott, S. and Bradshaw, J. (2010) Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, Research Undertaken for the Audit Commission at the University of York. <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/NEET.pdf> [accessed 12 March 2020]

and increased health/resilience	<p>Cost of mental health disorders is approximately £300 per year</p> <p>Cost to NHS of pregnancy/birth - £4,000.</p> <p>Cost of care for child - residential care £150,000 and £36,000 for foster care for a child.</p> <p>Savings per person, per year diverted from substance abuse - £6,250.</p> <p>Cost per offence of crime - £5,500.</p>	<p>substance misuse and crimes against the individual. In the absence of a counterfactual, it is not possible to work out realistic likelihoods of these costs arising in the absence of the intervention, or the reduction in these probabilities which the intervention promotes.</p>
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9. Summary of key findings on 7 practice features and 7 outcomes

As reported in the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Round 1 Final Evaluation Report (Sebba et al, 2017), further evidence is required to begin to build an evidence base about what support is needed to help families and protect vulnerable children. The report found strong indications of positive impact on some key outcomes for children and families, and features of practice that appear to be effective. These practice features are focused on registered social workers, and are grounded in social work practice. They relate to the whole population of looked after children.

Staying Close is aimed at young adults leaving residential care. It is designed to support these young people as they transition from care to independent adulthood. While Staying Close workers engage with registered social workers, and while some of the schemes are located in children's social services departments, Staying Close as an intervention is located within the wider social care system, and Staying Close workers are generally from the wider non-social work, social care professions. As such, many of the practice features and outcomes are not directly relevant to Staying Close, and do not appear as features of the Staying Close pilots. Five of these features are relevant and are discussed below in relation to Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire.

Using a strengths-based practice framework. Participants in this research did not speak explicitly about using a strengths-based practice framework. Findings do suggest that the pilot is working in a personalised way - recognising that young people should have been involved in the design and delivery of services to help them transition out of care. The evaluation has found evidence that this personalised care was much more focused on support needs, with little/no discussion of young people's individual strengths. Some young people who took part in this evaluation spoke specifically (as highlighted in chapter 5) about how their strengths were being recognised and supported by Staying Close workers, and how support workers offered sensitive and responsive support at those times and in those places where it was most needed. Overall, we conclude that the pilot is not using a strengths-based practice framework.

Systemic theoretical models. The key role of the Staying Close worker is to capitalise on a relationship-based approach to enable successful transitions, human development, and change. In practice, this means that the challenges that young people in North East Lincolnshire face are now (more) formally addressed within the pathway planning process. This approach to support recognises that not all care leavers can experience a successful transition to autonomy entirely on their own.

Now that young people are being better supported through the Staying Close offer, a central part of their relational pattern, or social system, has been shown to enable adjustments in the immediate context that can provide a further source of strength and support.

Enabling staff to do skilled direct work. The Staying Close offer provides an important extension to the role of the residential care worker. Now that specific workload allocation is given to the Staying Close role, closely bound within a formal assessment and plan for intervention, residential carers are able to facilitate opportunities for young people to engage with more detailed, specific, individualised and task orientated work.

Multi-disciplinary skill sets working together. The Staying Close offer in North East Lincolnshire provides young people with a single, named Staying Close worker. This can help create a sense of stability during a difficult transition period as young people leave care. Whilst personal advisors, social workers, and housing officers have a particular function to provide advice, assess, implement, and review the pathway plan, several people involved in this research suggested that they can also be a stranger to the young person. As shown above, the opportunity to build on an established relationship can help the Staying Close worker to create a sense of stability by managing and promoting communication (directly and by encouraging young people to speak to other workers involved in their transition) between professional agencies.

High intensity and consistency of practitioner. The focus on continuity and consistency described in this report enables the Staying Close offer to capitalise on the theory of relationship-based practice. As shown above, Staying Close workers are able to help fence off the 'cliff edge' that is so often associated with the experience of leaving care but also provide a safety net to catch those young people who find themselves at risk of crisis.

10. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

This evaluation has found, based on our analysis and on the data provided by individuals who participated in this research (young people, staff, and wider stakeholders) that Staying Close complements and contributes to the existing leaving care system in North East Lincolnshire. A key finding of the evaluation is that the pilot has been successfully implemented; it has made changes to the Staying Close offer and how this is delivered, particularly in terms of the accommodation offer. There are elements of the pilot that are innovative, particularly the twice-weekly drop-in sessions. Staying Close is well regarded by staff, stakeholders, and young people accessing Staying Close support.

It appears that the pilot is making a contribution to positive education, employment and training outcomes, and is making a contribution to positive stable housing outcomes. In other areas, it has not been possible to measure the distance travelled by young people as they access Staying Close in the borough, or to assess whether Staying Close may have contributed to this positive change.

This evaluation has found, based on our analysis and on the data provided by individuals who participated in this research (young people, staff, and wider stakeholders) that young people have voice and choice when accessing Staying Close support in North East Lincolnshire. They have a choice about the type and level of support they receive, as well as about their primary support contact. They can also, informally, voice concerns and make suggestions, particularly through the drop-in sessions.

The Staying Close offer is personalised in North East Lincolnshire, and there is evidence that the pilot and the wider leaving care system recognises that the transition to independent adulthood is a journey (not always by the most direct route), which is different for each young person.

Recommendations

We recommend that:

- further work is needed to identify and reduce gaps and tensions in the leaving care system in the borough, particularly for young people who have wider health and social care support needs as they move from children's to adult services. The findings set out in the section on implementation success and challenges suggest some potential for tension between different parts of the leaving care system about where responsibilities and actions lie. It may also

be beneficial for the borough to examine the scopes of practice of different professionals in the system to ensure they are complementary and understood;

- more work is needed to demonstrate the outcomes achieved and the benefits generated by this form of support. In particular, some work to better align the pilot's objectives, expected outcomes, and outcome data collected would be beneficial. There are a number of different resources that are publicly available to support this work. A good place to start is the work of Bethia McNeil, Neil Reeder and Julia Rich (2012), published by the Young Foundation;
- the break-even analysis undertaken as part of this evaluation suggests that it is possible that the intervention will break-even, however further research is required to determine the actual scale of the savings made;
- the Department for Education should simplify the policy outcomes expected from Staying Close. The current objectives are not mutually exclusive, and include a number of terms that are fuzzy, contested, poorly defined, and open to interpretation. The term 'resilience', for example, appears in two of the current objectives; there is a high level of interaction between the objective around being ready for independent living and being in stable and suitable accommodation; and, the term stable accommodation is difficult to conceptualise and measure. Independent living is also generally understood to encompass being in education, employment or training, yet this is a separate outcome specified by the Department for Education. In two specific areas – physical health and resilience to unsafe behaviours – there is a lack of evidence to suggest that Staying Close could make a contribution to positive outcomes. The policy objectives are also expressed as a dichotomy (having been achieved or not achieved), which is not an appropriate way of assessing the journey experienced by young people as they transition to independent adulthood. It would be simpler to have a single policy objective for Staying Close, such as 'Increased readiness for independent living'; and
- North East Lincolnshire is one of eight Staying Close pilots in England. There are significant differences between the pilots in terms of their objectives, their expected outcomes, the Staying Close offer, how and what form of support is provided, and whether and how they work to provide safe and suitable accommodation for young people as they transition to independent adulthood. These differences are such that it is challenging to draw conclusions overall about Staying Close, which needs to be taken into account if Staying Close is rolled out nationally.
- The implementation of a formal strategy for collecting outcome data could enable future Staying Close projects to verify the progress experienced by

young people, and on the aims that it is trying to achieve. The data collected should relate directly to the outputs and outcomes specified in the Theory of Change. Important monitoring data that projects should try to capture include the number of young people eligible for the Staying Close offer and accessing the different components of the offer (e.g., number of young people living in Staying Close accommodation, number of young people attending social events etc.). Regular monitoring might include the frequency and nature of contacts with their key worker, the young person's status regarding accommodation, employment, and education. Ideally, young people would complete a survey once a year using validated well-being scales such as the ONS4, which measures life satisfaction, sense of worth of activities, happiness and anxiety, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale. It is important that the outcome data captures short and medium term outcomes, at least two points over time, to measure progress made by the young people. Outcome data could also include a list of independent living skills (possibly co-produced by young people) and a measure of their level of confidence against each skill. Each project will then need to add measures carefully tailored to their own theory of change. For instance, in the case of Staying Close Lincolnshire, it could include the number of incidents where young people are involved in crime. It is important to be clear on what is collected, how it is collected, how often, whether a measure of incidence or prevalence (ie currently homeless or has at some time in the past been homeless), and whether it is observed by you or self reported.

Appendix 1 - Distance travelled analysis

Introduction

Distance travelled is a form of analysis of the change in the behaviour of individuals who participate in a programme or receive an intervention. It is a simple way of understanding the contribution that a programme or intervention may make to the observed outcomes of participants. Distance travelled analysis is often used when to understand changes in 'soft' outcomes – outcomes which are broad, big picture, and often intangible and difficult to measure or quantify. Soft outcomes are often contrasted with hard outcomes, which typically have a high level of specificity, are tangible and easily measurable. Soft and hard outcomes are not mutually exclusive, and the difference between them is often the result of subjective decision making.

Distance travelled analysis is focused on changes in observed or self-reported behaviours/experiences/outcomes at the level of the individual programme participant or individual receiving an intervention. It does not allow for any changes in observed or self-reported behaviour or outcomes to be attributed to individual programmes or interventions. Such analysis does not involve comparing the progress of programme participants or intervention recipients with similar individuals who are not engaged in the programme or receiving the intervention; it does not involve controlling for factors beyond the intervention or programme that might affect the observed changes; nor does it involve examining average changes overall for programme participants. Despite these limitations, when combined with other elements of this evaluation – the implementation evaluation and the contribution analysis used to understand the impact of Staying Close – it provides a basis from which to judge whether and how the programme makes a difference to the lives of young people who participate in it.

Data

The North East Lincolnshire Staying Close team provided data to the evaluation team in two forms. First, individual level data about the thirty seven (n=37) individuals eligible for Staying Close services in the area, of whom twenty two (n=22/37) received some form of Staying Close support during the period of the evaluation. These data include the age, gender, ethnicity, and care history of each eligible individual, information about their current and future accommodation, their interaction with other agencies, as well as outcome data relevant to Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire. The second data set is three-monthly summaries or 'scorecards' of Staying Close activities and outcomes. Together, these two datasets provide a rich insight into the progress of the scheme and the outcomes being achieved by young people accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire.

Policy objectives, scheme outcomes, and data

The Department for Education has identified a number of outcomes to which Staying Close might be expected to contribute. These include outcomes relate to: employment, education and training; independent living and accommodation, physical and mental health and wellbeing; behaviours; and, social networks. Individual Staying Close pilots are not expected to work towards achieving positive changes in all of these outcome areas, and there are differences in which of these outcomes are and are not objectives for individual schemes. It is also the case that schemes do not necessarily collect data to measure progress against each of their outcome objectives.

The North East Lincolnshire pilot has set out the outcomes it expects to achieve in its theory of change. This was initially developed by North East Lincolnshire Council with support from the Spring Consortium as part of the council's bid for Department for Education funding, and has been further developed through the evaluation. The theory of change was reviewed and revised by the pilot in November 2019. The North East Lincolnshire pilot aims to improve outcomes for young people accessing Staying Close in nine areas:

- are more independent;
- have a stable home;
- continue to engage in EET;
- feel less lonely/improved wellbeing;
- have strong supportive relationships;
- make a positive contribution to society;
- continue to engage with health services;
- become peer mentors and role models; and
- increased resilience.

The pilot has also identified staff and partner outcomes.

North East Lincolnshire's theory of change sets out eight indicators/evidence of progress against which it seeks to measure progress in achieving the pilot's outcomes. There are also five outcomes against which it reports in its quarterly 'scorecards'. There are some differences between the original theory of change outcomes, the revised outcomes and measures, and the outcomes which are reported in the scorecards. For ease of reference, the evaluation team has drawn on the outcomes reported in the scorecards. The individual level data provided by North East Lincolnshire provide a single assessment/reference point, some of which directly relate to the outcomes specified for the scheme, and some outcomes are not covered by data collected. Table 10 maps the national policy objectives to the North

East Lincolnshire specific objectives, and the outcome data collected by the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close team.

Table 10: Mapping of national policy objectives, NELC policy objectives, and outcome data/measures

<i>National outcome objectives</i>	<i>NELC outcome objectives (revised theory of change)</i>	<i>NELC outcome data (scorecards and individual data)</i>
Are in education, employment or training	Continue to engage in EET	Education, employment or training (quarterly score card) Individual data includes EET status 6 months prior to SC
Are in accommodation that is suitable and stable	Have a stable home	Stability in tenancy/ home & financially independent (quarterly score card) Individual data includes type of accommodation when eligible for Staying Close, and suitability of accommodation (single assessment, no pre and post)
Are physically healthy	Continue to engage with health services	Not directly reported in the quarterly scorecards (child mental health is reported) Individual data includes whether individual has EHCP plan and engagement with health services (single assessment, no pre and post), and self reported 'worry scales'.
Are ready for independent living	Are more independent	Not directly reported in the quarterly scorecards Individual data includes expected result of moving on plan (single assessment, no pre and post)
Are resilient to unsafe behaviours	Increased resilience	Not directly reported in the quarterly scorecards Individual data includes: whether involved in self harm, alcohol misuse, substance misuse, experiencing domestic violence, bullying and harassment (single assessment, no pre and post)

<i>National outcome objectives</i>	<i>NELC outcome objectives (revised theory of change)</i>	<i>NELC outcome data (scorecards and individual data)</i>
Report good social connections	Have strong supportive relationships	Reduced loneliness and isolation (scorecard) Not covered by individual data
Feel well-supported	None	Engaging a number of former LAC young people as future mentors and role models (scorecard) Not covered by individual data
	Make a positive contribution to society	None
	Become peer mentors and role models	None

Number of young people accessing Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire

The North East Lincolnshire Staying Close team has identified that there are thirty seven individuals (n=37) in the area who are eligible for Staying Close support. Twenty five of these individuals are male, and twelve are female. All are recorded as being White British. The cohort has an average age of just under 19 years, ranging from 16 to 22. Seventeen are recorded as having a Statement of Education Needs (SEN), one with physical/sensory disability, one with mental health issues, and two for which information is not recorded.

The North East Lincolnshire data also provides some details on the care histories of individuals before they started to get Staying Close support. On average, the cohort spent seven years in care (median of five years), ranging from individuals who spent most of their life in care through to individuals who entered care in 2017. Figure 4 provides insight into the number of eligible individuals by their care history duration (the horizontal axis is the number of years in care, the vertical axis is the count of the number of young people).

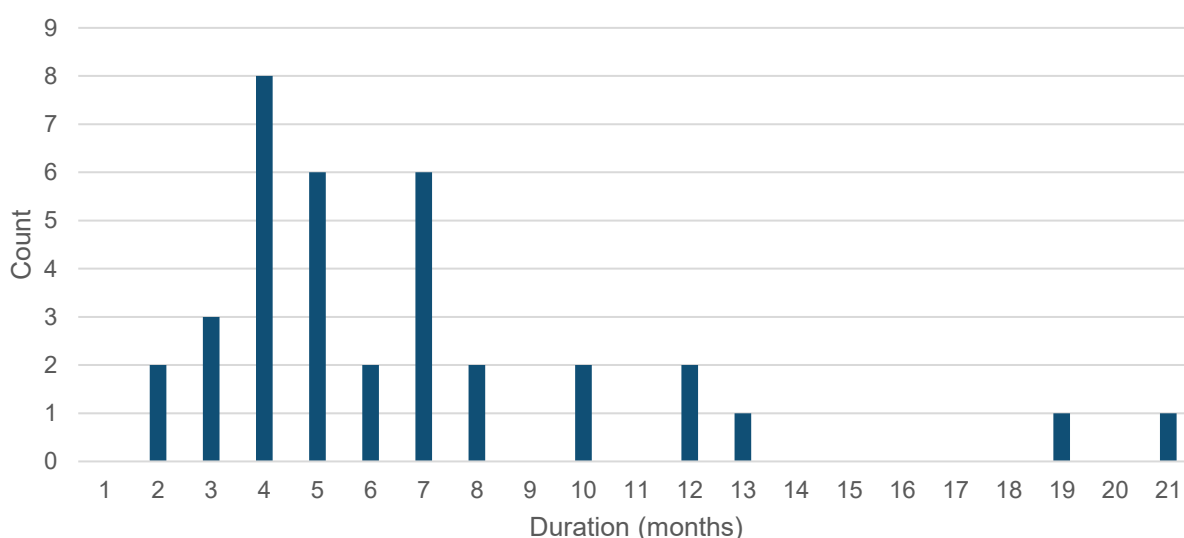


Figure 4: Count of number of eligible young people by duration of care experience (n=37)

Of the cohort eligible for Staying Close, nineteen were on a full care order before they received support, sixteen are recorded as being supported under section 20 of the Children's Act 1989 (which places a duty on local authorities to provide accommodation to children if they are without a home), one as being a former care leaver, and one for whom no data are recorded.

Not all of the thirty seven individuals who are eligible for Staying Close in North East Lincolnshire are receiving support. Ten have not engaged with the pilot, and five are

being contacted. Table 11 presents data on the number of young people eligible for, engaged with, and receiving Staying Close support in North East Lincolnshire in each quarter between November 2018 and January 2020.

Table 11: Count of eligibility, engagement, and receipt of Staying Close support

	Nov 18 - Jan 19	Feb 19 - April 19	May 19 - July 19	Aug 19 - Oc 19	Nov 19 - Jan 20
Eligible	36	37	37	37	37
Engaged	25	27	23	31	32
Receiving support	25	27	23	23	23

For those who are in receipt of Staying Close, there are different levels of engagement recorded by the pilot, reflecting both their levels of need and their individual choices. In January 2020, of the twenty three receiving support, two are involved in group activities only, fourteen are accessing support worker services only, and six are in receipt of both group and support work (data not provided on one individual). There is an interesting gender spread in levels of engagement; although the cohort is over two thirds male, half of those who are not engaged are female and half accessing support worker only support are female.

The North East Lincolnshire data also records the start date for individual Staying Close support plans. These data are incomplete; records are provided for twenty two individuals, for whom start dates are recorded for fifteen, and seven are recorded as 'not applicable' (because they have not engaged or been contacted). There are fifteen for whom no data are recorded. This fifteen includes six individuals who have not engaged or been contacted, and nine who are currently receiving support.

Distance travelled: education, employment or training outcome

Of the twenty three individuals receiving Staying Close services during the evaluation period, thirteen (n=13/22) were in some form of education in the six months prior to receiving support, two were recorded as being not in education, employment or training (NEET), and no information is provided on eight. Of the thirteen recorded as being in education, ten were aged 18 and under, and all but one of the individuals for whom no data were recorded were aged 18 years and over.

Table 12 presents the data in relation to education, employment and training. These data have been extrapolated from the quarterly 'score cards' provided by the North East Lincolnshire team.

Table 12: Number of young people in education, employment or training each quarter, November 2018 to January 2020

	Nov 18 - Jan 19	Feb 19 - April 19	May 19 - July 19	Aug 19 - Oc 19	Nov 19 - Jan 20
EET	8	12	13	10	11
NEET	10	10	6	6	3
Other	7	5	4	7	9

Overall, these data do suggest an increase in both the number and proportion of all those receiving Staying Close who are in education, employment or training between November 2018 and January 2020, although these numbers and proportions do fluctuate between quarters, with both peaking in the period May to July 2019.

There is a much clearer picture in relation to the number and proportion recorded as being not in education, employment or training (NEET), which has fallen consistently over the period. So, in the first quarter, some forty per cent of the cohort were recorded as NEET (n=10/25), falling each quarter to 13 per cent (n=3/23) by January 2020. Figure 5 illustrates the changes over time as a proportion of all young people receiving Staying Close in the borough.

As is clear in both Table 12 and Figure 5, there are a number of people accessing Staying Close who are not recorded as either being in or not in education, employment or training. This fluctuates over the period, both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the overall cohort. It is worth noting that even if we assume that everyone for whom data are not recorded is assumed to be NEET, the overall absolute number and proportion of the cohort known and assumed to be NEET would fall over the lifetime of the pilot.

From this analysis, we conclude that there has been a reduction in the number and proportion of Staying Close participants not in education, employment or training over the lifetime of the pilot.

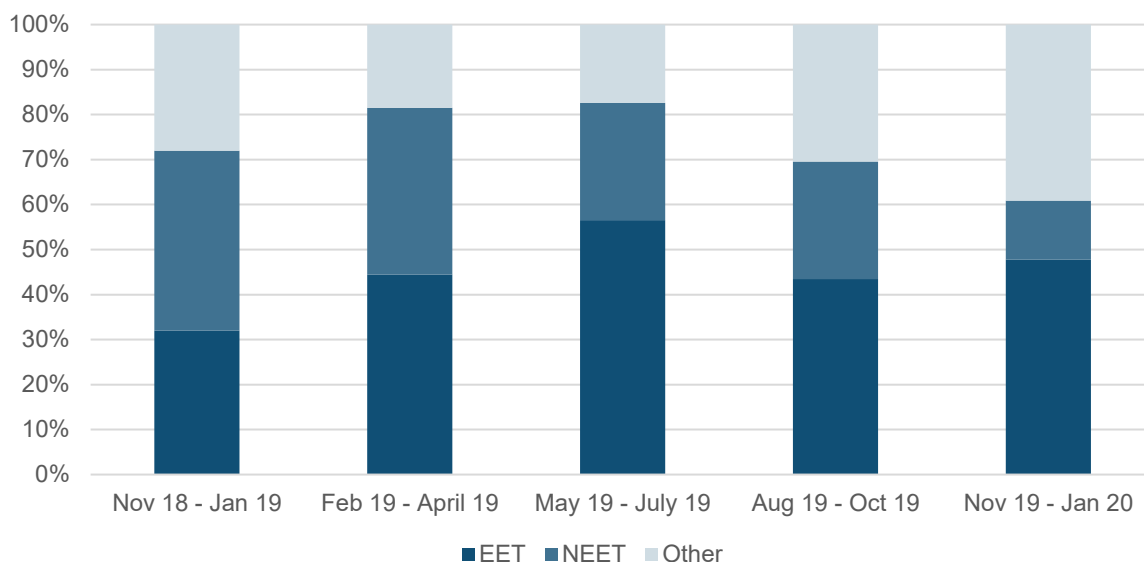


Figure 5: Proportion of all young people receiving Staying Close in EET and NEET by quarter, November 2018 to January 2020

Distance travelled: are in accommodation that is safe and suitable

The quarterly score cards provided by the North East Lincolnshire team include information on the housing/tenure status of people accessing Staying Close in the borough. From this, we have extrapolated the data presented in Table 13; it should be noted that for the penultimate quarter, the information in the information presented in the score card gives a total that is higher than the number of people accessing Staying Close in that quarter. This suggests either these are incidence data (and that individuals had more than one tenure status in the quarter) or that these data include individuals not currently accessing Staying Close. In the final quarter, there is one person for whom we have no housing/tenure information.

Table 13: Number of young people receiving Staying Close by housing/tenure status

	Nov 18 - Jan 19	Feb 19 - April 19	May 19 - July 19	Aug 19 - Oct 19	Nov 19 - Jan 20
Supported tenancy	2	6	3	4	5
Independent tenancy	8	8	8	9	6
Homeless/secure accommodation	1	3	4	3	4
Placement/foyer	14	7	7	9	6
Family	0	3	1	0	1
Total	25	27	23	25	22

These data do not provide a direct measure of the change over the pilot's lifetime in the number/proportion of Staying Close recipients who are in accommodation that is safe and suitable. Indeed, the concept of stable housing is highly contested, and difficult to measure (Frederick et al., 2014), partly because it covers both objective and subjective understandings of what constitutes stability. However, these data can be used as a somewhat crude proxy measure of this outcome. Drawing on these data, if we assume that supported tenancies, independent tenancies, and living with family are safe and suitable forms of accommodation (and, conversely, that being homeless or in secure accommodation, or being in a placement/foyer is not), we can provide a proxy estimate of the change in this outcome measure. Table 14 illustrates this in terms of absolute numbers, and Figure 6 illustrates the relative proportions.

Table 14: Numbers of Staying Close recipients in safe and suitable accommodation (estimates)

	Nov 18 - Jan 19	Feb 19 - April 19	May 19 - July 19	Aug 19 - Oct 19	Nov 19 - Jan 20
Safe and secure	10	17	12	13	12
Not safe or secure	15	10	11	12	10

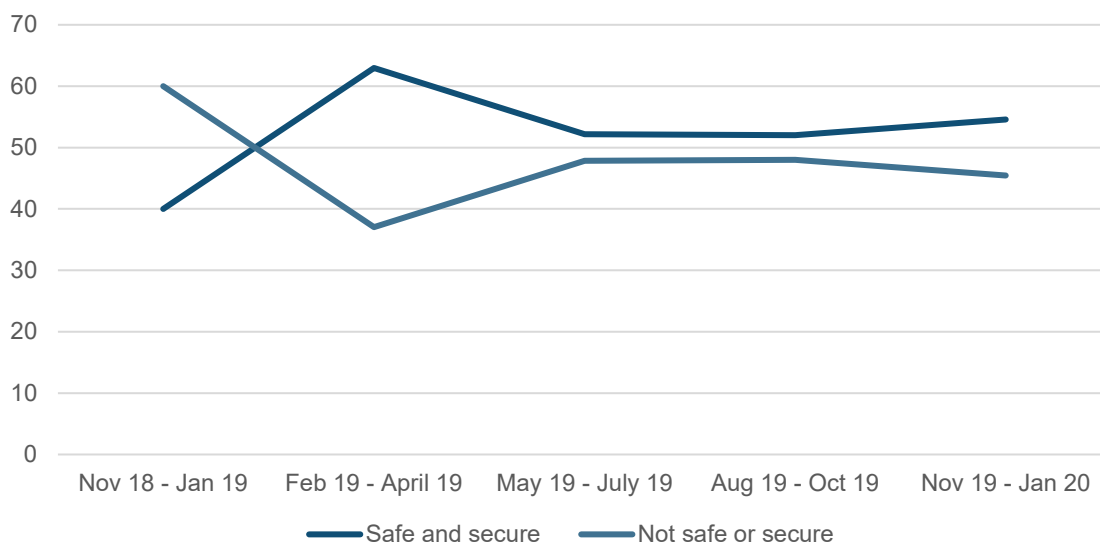


Figure 6: Changes in proportions of Staying Close recipients in safe and suitable accommodation (estimates)

This analysis suggests a somewhat mixed picture in relation to this outcome. A simple pre and post comparison would suggest a slight increase in the numbers and proportion in safe and suitable accommodation between November 2018 and January 2020. The analysis does suggest, however, that there were fluctuations over the lifetime of the pilot in this outcome.

Appendix 2 – Cost benefit analysis

Aims and objectives of cost evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation was to gather information on the cost of the Staying Close Cost pilot that are *additional* to those costs which would have been accrued had the pilot not been running. Additionality is the guiding principle of cost capture, requiring a comparison of the costs of the pilot to the situation had the pilot not been running.

The objective of the cost evaluation was to provide an assessment of the full cost of the pilot, taking into account direct, indirect and absorbed costs, and by augmenting existing sources of cost data with information based on the experience of those implementing the pilot. This was necessary because a proportion of the costs were absorbed into existing budgets, for example, Local Authority budgets and existing office accommodation provision. Therefore accurate costs could not be obtained from a simple analysis of relevant accounts.

A secondary objective was to comment on the value for money of the Staying Close Cost more generally. However, as outlined below, this was far from straightforward due to variations in throughput and the absence of an appropriate counterfactual. As we note below, there is evidence the project may break even, however this is a matter for further research.

Cost capture methods

The cost capture process involved three methods:

- cost-capture questionnaires completed by key stakeholders, followed by further liaison as required;
- triangulation of interview data with existing data sources such as accounts data where available; and
- comparison of quantitative data sources and qualitative interview material to determine adequacy of coverage of cost points and estimation of the likely missing cost points as required.

Costs captured

The range of costs captured included:

- capital costs (including IT equipment);
- running costs (rent, utilities, maintenance, insurance, subcontracts and so on);
- staff related costs (relocation, recruitment, training, salary and time spent);

- absorbed costs, where the costs of the pilot have been absorbed by cross-subsidy from existing budgets, from existing surplus capacity or from staff goodwill; and
- other costs of Staying Close, for example, briefing groups and transportation.

Cost Estimates

In Table 10, we provide estimates of the setup and running costs of the pilot. We also provide an estimate of cost per young person on the pilot.

We break the costs down into two types:

- pilot setup costs – costs which we would expect to see incurred once irrespective of the level of young people on the pilot: £20,075.
- pilot annual costs – costs we regard as fixed irrespective of the level of young people on the pilot: £187,697 per annum.
- pilot total costs – amounting, by March 2020, to £489,318.

The assumptions and calculations behind these estimations are set out in subsequent sections.

Table 15: Pilot costs

Category	Cost	Per annum	Total ⁷
Project Setup Costs			£20,075
Capital Costs			
IT equipment: PCs, printers, networking, &c.	£6,222		
Accommodation costs	–		
Furniture costs	£11,618		
Vehicle, transportation costs	£1,110		
Staff Related Costs			
Costs of Relocation of staff	N/A		
Costs of recruiting staff:	£1,125		
Training Costs and Other Preparatory Events	–		
Project Running Costs (per annum, except where noted)		£187,697	£469,243
Staff Salary Costs			
Management Staff 1FTE	£44,400		
Staying Close Coordinator 1FTE	£31,388		
Staying Close Wellbeing Worker 1FTE	£36,626		
Participation Officer 1FTE	£27,000		
Staying Close Trainee FT for a 6-months	£14,601		
Staying Close Trainee FT for a 6-months	£14,602		
Non-staff costs			
Telephone/Broadband &c. Bills	£7,200		
Annual rental for drop-in group premises	£4,680		
Travel costs	£3,200		
Ongoing training - Health and well being qualification (two years)	£8,000		
Total costs to March 2020			£489,318

⁷ Estimated to March 2020.

Estimations and assumptions

The breakdown of costs requires a number of reasonable assumptions:

- absorbing of accommodation costs into the overall office cost is based on the observation that the cost of services (telephone, broadband &c.) is estimated to be £100 per month per FTE, which seems reasonable for serviced office space in Lincolnshire⁸;
- IT costs are assumed to be depreciated over a four-year time horizon. For the purposes of this pilot, they are assumed to be fixed;
- we assume that the need to train Staying Close trainees stayed on after training in 0.5 FTE contracts at the same rate of pay; and
- we assume there is some capacity to increase the number of young people in Staying Close without a significant increase in staff costs. Obviously if there were a significant increase in the number of young people, this assumption will have to be revisited.

Cost per young person on the pilot

The number of young people accessing Staying Close has fluctuated over the lifetime of the pilot, and not all of those who are eligible for support decide to access Staying Close services. For the purposes of these calculations, we have assumed that the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot is designed to support 25 young people. We will assume here that this is the number of people actually on the pilot. This means that:

- over the period of one year (that is to say, ignoring set up costs) the cost of Staying Close delivery to each of these young people is £7,508;
- over the intervention as a whole (to March 2020) and ignoring setup costs, the cost per young person is estimated to be £18,770; and
- over the intervention as a whole, (to March 2020), and including setup costs, the cost per young person is estimated to be £19,573.

Benefits Estimates

The outcomes expected from the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot are intended to include:

⁸ c.f. <https://www.flexioffices.co.uk/lincolnshire/grimsby?radius=1>

- more independence;
- having a stable home;
- continuing to engage in EET;
- having strong supportive relationships;
- continuing to engage with health services; and
- increased resilience.

In the following we consider each of these in turn and estimate the potential savings to the state and society.

Improved independent living skills/having stable home

The major cost to society which might be avoided by those young people in the Staying Close pilot is homelessness. It is estimated that the average cost of a homeless person to the public purse is⁹ £26,000 each year. However, a more reasonable alternative to Staying Close might be the cost of Local Authority Residential Care, which may cost up to¹¹ £3,000 per week. It is clear that it would take a few weeks in residential care averted to have the intervention break even at that rate.

Stable Education, Employment or Training

The public finance costs of a young person who is NEET, that is to say, not in education, employment or training, over the course of their life have been estimated to be¹⁰ £72,000. The cost to society as a whole, including to the young person, has been estimated to be¹⁰ £133,500. The cost is increased by nearly 100% if we compare the average life outcomes of a NEET young person with the average outcomes of a graduate (on average).

Better relationships management and increased health/resilience

There is no clear indicator we might use as a proxy in a situation such as this. We might take, as proxies, the reduction in the likelihood of a teen pregnancy, the potential of reduction in the probability of substance abuse, and a potential reduction in criminal activity in the areas of substance misuse and crimes against the individual. In the

⁹ HomelessLink (online) Impact of homelessness. <https://www.homeless.org.uk/facts/understanding-homelessness/impact-of-homelessness> [accessed 10 March 2020].

¹⁰ Updated for inflation from Coles, B., Godfrey, C., Keung, A., Parrott, S. and Bradshaw, J. (2010) Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, Research Undertaken for the Audit Commission at the University of York. <https://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/research/pdf/NEET.pdf> [accessed 12 March 2020]

absence of a counterfactual, it is not possible to work out realistic likelihoods of these costs arising in the absence of the intervention, or the reduction in these probabilities which the intervention promotes. Notwithstanding, it is clear that the costs of poor relationships are significant.

General Health

We may note, in the first instance, the cost to the NHS of an A&E visit is estimated to be¹¹ £129, the costs of a visit to a GP are circa¹¹ £43. The cost to the public of adolescents suffering from mental health disorders is approximately¹¹ £300 per year.

Teen pregnancy

The estimated cost to the NHS of a teen pregnancy which is carried to term is estimated to be¹² £4,000. This includes the cost of antenatal, intrapartum and postnatal care. It does not include the impact of the baby on the employment outturns of the parent or the cost of bringing up the baby. The average cost to the NHS of a termination is¹² £800; this does not include the psychological cost to the young person.

There is some evidence that, where young people become young parents, Staying Close is providing them with the support they need to be more likely to continue looking after their child(ren). In the absence of this, it is relatively more likely such children would be taken into care. The cost of this varies but a reasonable estimate of the cost of residential care for a child is¹³ £150,000 and £36,000 for foster care for a child.

Substance misuse

The estimated average cost of substance misuse is proxied by the savings which might be made from an effective treatment programme. These in turn are proxied by the potential criminal activity with which they are associated. The savings per person, per year diverted from substance abuse are estimated to be¹⁴ £6,250.

¹¹ Updated for inflation from New Economy (Greater Manchester) (online) Business Case Support Tool. Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Troubled Families Unit, and Greater Manchester and Birmingham City Council. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/download-community-action-7a0.xlsx> [accessed 19 March 2020].

¹² Updated for inflation based on NICE (2014) Contraceptive Services With a Focus on Young People up to the Age of 25. Manchester: National Institute for Health and Care Excellence. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ph51/resources/costing-report-pdf-69198589> [accessed 10 March 2020]

¹³ Updated for inflation from NAO (2014) Children in Care. <https://www.nao.org.uk/report/children-in-care/> [accessed 20 March 2020].

¹⁴ Updated for inflation from National Treatment Agency for Substance Misuse (2012) Estimating the Crime Reduction Benefits of Drug Treatment and Recovery, London: NHS. https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/17540/1/NTA_Estimating_crime_reduction_benefits.pdf [accessed 15 March 2020]

Involvement in crime

The average cost per offence of commercial crime and crimes against the individual (excluding fraud and cybercrime) or against is estimated to be¹⁵ £5,500.

Conclusions

Although there is no obvious counterfactual we may employ in the case of the North East Lincolnshire Staying Close pilot, the level of the costs which might be saved if young people are diverted from a range of negative outcomes are significant. It seems reasonable to suppose that there is a likelihood the intervention will break even because the potential savings if young people are diverted from a range of negative outcomes is likely to be higher than the costs of the intervention, however further research is required to determine the actual scale of the savings made.

¹⁵ Updated for inflation from Heeks, M., Reed, S., Tafsiri M. and Prince, S. (2018) The Economic and Social Costs of Crime: Second Edition, Research Report 99, London: Home Office, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/732110/the-economic-and-social-costs-of-crime-horr99.pdf [accessed 19 March 2020].

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